







CHEFS-D'OEUVRE
DU
ROMAN CONTEMPORAIN

ROMANCISTS

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THE ROMANCISTS

ALFRED DE MUSSET

NOUVELLES



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Pierre and Camille Chapter II

She spoke by signs to her child, and she alone could understand her. The other persons of the household, including the chevalier, were as strangers to Camille.

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DES CHEFS-D'ŒUVRE
DU ROMAN
CONTEMPORAIN

THE TWO MISTRESSES

EMMELINE

THE SON OF TITIAN

FRÉDÉRIC AND BERNERETTE

PIERRE AND CAMILLE

ALFRED DE MUSSET

OF THE ACADEMIE FRANÇAISE

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THIS EDITION OF THE
NOUVELLES
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BY
GERTRUDE CHRISTIAN FOSDICK
THE ETCHINGS ARE BY
FR.-EUGENE BURNEY
P.-LOUIS-PROSPER LUCAS
DANIEL MORDANT
AFTER A MINIATURE BY
MARIE MOULIN
AND DRAWINGS BY
ORESTE CORTAZZO AND
FRANCOIS FLAMENG

THE TWO MISTRESSES

1837







I

Do you believe, madame, that it would be possible to be in love with two persons at the same time? If such a question were put to me I would answer No! It is, however, just what happened to a friend of mine, whose story I am going to relate to you, so that you can judge for yourself.

In general, when it is necessary to reconcile a duplex love, one has, in the first place, recourse to contrasts. One was large, the other small; one was fifteen years old, the other thirty. In short, one tries to prove that

two women who do not resemble each other in age, appearance or character could inspire at the same time two different passions. I have no such pretext to aid me here, for, on the contrary, the two women with whom I have to deal resembled each other a little. It is true one was married and the other a widow ; one rich and the other quite poor ; but they were almost of the same age, both brunettes and very small. Although they were neither sisters nor cousins, there somehow existed a family resemblance between them : the same large, dark eyes ; the same delicateness of outline : they were two speckled pullets. Do not be afraid of this comparison ; there will be nothing equivocal in this story.

Before saying more of these ladies, however, I must speak of our hero. About 1825 there lived in Paris a young man called Valentin. He was a queer enough youth and his strange manner of living would have furnished food for thought to a philosopher who makes man a study. He had within himself two different persons, so to speak. Meeting him one day you would have taken him for a fop of the days of the Regency. His jaunty air, his hat set back on his head, his appearance of a well-to-do fellow in high feather would have recalled to your mind some Red-Heel of other days. The next day you would have seen in him only a modest, country student, walking along with a book under his arm. To-day he would ride in a coach and throw money out of the window ; to-morrow his dinner

would cost forty sous. Either way he demanded that everything be complete and would have nothing that was not in keeping with his tastes. When he started out to have a good time he wished that it should be all pleasure, and he was not a man to buy a pleasure by even a moment's discomfort. If he had a box at the theatre he wanted a fine dinner beforehand, a luxurious carriage to take him there, and that no disagreeable thought be presented to him before he started. Then he drank sour wine at a public house with good grace and took his place in line to get a ticket for the gallery. This was another element, and it was not difficult for him to accommodate himself to it ; so if there were two different men in him they never became confounded.

This strange character proceeded from two causes : a small fortune and a great love of pleasure. Valentin's family was in comfortable circumstances, but there was nothing more in the house than an honest mediocrity. One cannot starve on twelve thousand francs a year, but when an entire family subsists on it there is nothing left for luxuries. Notwithstanding, Valentin, by some caprice of fate, was born with the tastes of the son of a grand lord. An avaricious father, they say, makes a prodigal son ; economical parents, extravagant children. Thus Providence wills, and the world admires.

Valentin had passed his examinations and was a lawyer without a brief, a common profession nowadays. With the money he had from his father, and

that which he gained from time to time, he might have been happy enough if he had not preferred to spend everything he had at one time and do without the next day. You remember, madame, those marguerites which the children pull apart, bit by bit. *Much* they say to the first leaf; *moderately* to the second; *not at all* to the third. This was what Valentin did with his days, only there was no *moderately*, for he did not allow it.

In order to make you understand him better I must tell you a trick of his when a child. When ten or twelve years old Valentin slept in a little chamber with glass partition, behind his mother's room. In this little room, unattractive enough in appearance, and crowded with dusty chests, was stored, among other articles of furniture or furnishings, an old portrait in a splendid gilt frame. When, on fine mornings, the sun shone on this portrait, the child knelt on his bed and drew near it with delight. When everyone believed him asleep, while waiting to be called he remained sometimes for hours with his forehead leaning against the corner of the frame. The rays of light striking upon the gilding surrounded him with a sort of aureola in which his dazzled vision swam. In this posture a curious ecstasy possessed him and he wove a thousand dreams. The more brilliant the light became the more his head expanded. Finally when he had to turn away his eyes, tired by the brilliancy of this spectacle, he closed his lids, and considered, curiously, the

gradations of shaded tints which appear in the form of a red spot when we have looked too long at the light ; then he returned to his frame and commenced all over again. That was the way, he told me himself, that he got his passionate taste for gold and the sun—two excellent things you will allow.

His first steps in life were guided by the instinct of this innate passion. At college he allied himself with children richer than himself, not through pride, but from choice. Precocious in his studies he progressed less through self-love, than a certain need of distinction. He would cry in the midst of the class when he had not his place on the bench of honor on Saturday. He was doing his part well and working with ardor, when a lady friend of his mother made him a present of a beautiful turquoise, and often instead of listening to his lesson, he watched the ring glittering on his finger. It was the same love of gold which he had been sensible of when a child. When the child was a man this dangerous passion soon brought its fruits.

Hardly had he attained his liberty when he threw himself without reflection into all the caprices of a gentleman of means. Naturally of a lively disposition, careless of the future, the idea that he was poor never seemed to occur to him and he troubled himself about nothing. The world made him understand it later. The name he bore permitted him to treat as equals young people who had the advantage of him in

fortune. Received by them, the question was how to imitate them. Valentin's parents lived in the country. Under the pretext of taking his examinations he passed his time walking in the Tuileries or on the boulevard. Here he was on equal grounds, but when his friends left him to ride horseback he was forced to remain on foot, alone and a little disappointed. His tailor gave him credit, but how can one dress well when his pocket is empty? Three-quarters of the time he was in this predicament. Too proud to sponge on his friends he tried to disguise his secret motives in the garb of prudence and refused haughtily to join any pleasure party where he could not pay his part, and he taught himself not to taste of expensive pleasures except on his days of prosperity.

This rôle, sustained with difficulty, fell upon the paternal will when it became necessary to choose a vocation. Valentin formed a connection with a banking house. The position of clerk pleased him little, and the daily routine of work even less. He went to the office in low spirits, as it was necessary to renounce his friends along with his liberty. He was not ashamed, but he was bored. When it happened, as André Chénier said, to be the day of his golden vein a sort of fever seized him. Whether he had debts to pay or some useful purchase to make, the presence of the gold excited him to such an extent that he was lost in reflection over it. Only to see a little of this rare metal glisten

in his hands made his heart tremble with excitement, and if it happened to be a beautiful day he felt as if he could run for joy. When I say run I mistake; one would find him on such a day in a fine, hired carriage, being taken to the *Rocher de Cancale*; there, extended upon the cushions, breathing the air, or smoking his cigar, he allowed himself to be gently rocked without ever once thinking of the morrow. To-morrow, however, was just as usual and he must return to the clerkship; but that mattered little to him so long as he had, at any price, satisfied his ideas. The salary of the month thus vanished away in a single day. He said he spent his bad moments in dreaming and his good ones in realizing his dreams. Sometimes in Paris, sometimes in the country, one would meet him indulging in his foolish extravagance, but he was almost always alone, which proved that it was not vanity on his part. Besides, he committed these excesses with the naturalness of a great lord who indulges himself in a caprice. That is a great specimen of a clerk, you will say; well, he got his well-merited discharge.

With liberty and idleness, temptations of all kinds came back to him. When one has a great many desires, the restless energy of youth, and very little money, one runs great risks of doing foolish things. Valentin did a great many. Always pushed on by his mania for bringing about the realization of his dreams, he began to enjoy the most dangerous dreams. It occurred to

him to experience—mentally, I suppose—what must be the life of one who had one hundred thousand francs a year. So this giddy head acted all one day as if he had been such a person. Imagine where that could lead one who had little intelligence and curiosity. Valentin's reasoning about his manner of life was, too, humorous enough. He claimed that to every living creature there comes by right a certain amount of pleasure. He compared this sum to one full cup which the economical sipped, drop by drop, while he drank his at one great guip. "I do not count life by days," he said, "but by pleasures; and the day when I spend twenty-five louis, I have one hundred and eighty-two thousand five hundred francs."

In the midst of all these follies Valentin had a sentiment in his heart which ought to have saved him; this was his affection for his mother. It is true his mother had always spoilt him; it is a fault, they say; I know nothing about that, but certainly it is the best and most natural of faults. The excellent woman, who had given life to Valentin, had done everything in the world to make it pleasant for him. As you know, she was not rich, however if all the crown-pieces she had slipped into the beloved child's hand, on the sly, had been heaped together they would have made a goodly pile. In all his excesses, Valentin had no other restraint than that he must not bring pain to his mother; and this idea followed him everywhere. This affection opened his

heart to all good thoughts, to all pure sentiments. It was to him the key of a world which, without it, he never could have understood. I do not know who first said that a beloved one is never really unfortunate ; but he might have said, also, that he who loves his mother is never really wicked. When Valentin came home after some foolish enterprise

“ Trainant l'aile et tirant le pié,”

his mother was always ready to console him. Who can count the patient care, the loving attentions, the little home joys, by which friendship is proved in silence and life is rendered sweet and free from care ! I am going to cite you an instance in passing.

One day, when this rash fellow had emptied his purse at play, he came home in a bad humor. He sat brooding over his misfortune, with his elbows on the table and his head resting on his hands. His mother came in bringing a great bouquet of roses in a glass of water which she put down gently beside him on the table. He raised his eyes to thank her and she said to him, smiling : “ They only cost four sous.” As you see, that was not dear and yet the bouquet was superb. Left alone with the roses he felt their perfume soothe his excited brain. I do not know how to tell you what impression such a pleasure, so easily attained, and so unexpected, produced upon him. He thought of the sum he had lost at play, and wondered what he could do

for the maternal hand which could console him so easily. His heart swelled and the tears flowed when he thought of the pleasures possible to the poor which he had forgotten.

The pleasures of the poor gradually became dear to him as he knew them better. He loved them because he loved his mother, and having tried everything a little he found that he was capable of feeling pleasure in everything. Is it an advantage? I do not know. Possibilities of joy make possibilities of pain.

I will seem to be joking if I tell you that as Valentin advanced in life he became at the same time more wise and more foolish; it is, however, the simple truth. A double existence developed in him. If his covetous nature drew him away, his heart held him at home. If he shut himself up, deciding to be quiet, a hand-organ playing a waltz under his window upset everything. If he went out, and, according to his custom, ran after pleasure, the meeting with a beggar on the way, or a touching word found by chance in the trash of a drama would render him thoughtful and he would return home. If he tried to write, his errant pen would sketch on the margin of the paper the profile of a pretty woman whom he had met at a ball. When a jolly crowd, assembled at a friend's house, invited him to remain to supper, he would take a glass and laughingly drink a generous bumper, then fumbling in his pocket and finding that he had forgotten his latch-key, he would awaken his mother by coming in late; he

would steal away in the midst of the merriment and come back to smell his beloved roses.

Such was this boy, madame; natural and giddy, timid and proud, tender and audacious. Nature had made him rich, and chance had made him poor; instead of choosing one, he played both parts. All that was in him of patience, reflection and resignation could not triumph over his love of pleasure, and his greatest moments of unreasonableness could not contaminate his heart. He did not struggle against his nature, nor the pleasures which attracted him. It was thus that he became double, and that he lived in a perpetual contradiction of himself, as I have just shown you. But that is weakness, you say. Ah, yes! it is not being like a Roman, but we are not in Rome!

We are in Paris, madame, and it is a question of two loves. Happily for you the portraits of my heroines will be given more quickly than that of my hero. Turn the page, they are about to enter on the scene.

II

I have told you that of these two ladies one was rich and the other poor. You already understand why they

both pleased Valentin. I believe I have also told you that one was married and the other a widow. The Marquise de Parnes—this is the married one—was daughter and wife of a marquis. And what was better, she was very rich, and what was still better, she was entirely free, her husband being in Holland on business. She was not yet twenty-five and she found herself queen of a little realm at the end of the Chaussée d'Antin. This realm consisted of a small house built in perfect taste between a great court and a beautiful garden. It was the last folly of the defunct father-in-law, a great nobleman, and something of a libertine. The house, it is true, bore the evidences of the taste of its former master; it resembled more what was once called a “maison à parties” than the retreat of a young woman condemned to quiet by the absence of her husband. A round pavilion, separated from the house, occupied the middle of the garden. This pavilion, which had only one floor, consisted of one large room, an immense boudoir furnished with refinement and luxury. Madame de Parnes, who occupied the house, and was considered very discreet, did not, it was said, go to the pavilion, although a light was sometimes noticed there. Excellent company, fine dinners, handsome equipages, numerous servants, in a word, everything in the best style, characterized the house of the marquise. Moreover, a finished education had endowed her with a thousand accomplishments, and with all that is necessary in

order to please, save wit, she was able to enjoy everything she desired. An indispensable aunt was her constant chaperon. If asked about her husband she said that he was coming back soon, and no one thought of doubting her.

Madame Delaunay—she is the widow—had lost her husband when very young. She lived with her mother on a moderate pension obtained with the greatest difficulty. It was on the third floor of the Rue du Plat-d'Etain that you would generally find her at the window embroidering ; this being the only thing she knew how to do. Her education, you see, had been greatly neglected. A little parlor was all her domain ; at dinner-time they rolled in the walnut table, which during the day was banished to the antechamber. At night they opened an alcove which contained their two beds. The modest furnishings were preserved with scrupulous care. Although living in this simple way Madame Delaunay loved society. Some old friends of her husband gave little evening entertainments where she went decked in a fresh organdy gown. As with people without fortune there are no special seasons, these little gatherings happened all the year round. To be poor, young, beautiful and virtuous, is not so rare a merit as many people believe, nevertheless it is a merit.

When I told you that my Valentin loved these two women, I did not pretend to declare that he loved them

both equally. I might take you into my confidence and say that he *loved* one and *desired* the other, but I do not wish to make these fine distinctions, for however interesting they may be, they, after all, do not offer any signification if not that he desired them both. I would rather relate to you simply what passed in his heart.

His first motive in going often to these two houses was bad enough—the absence of the husbands. It is but too true that an appearance of ease, even when it is only an appearance, pleases young minds. Valentin was received at the house of Madame de Parnes for no better reason than that she received a great many people and a friend had presented him. It was not so easy to visit Madame Delaunay, for she received no one. He had met her at one of the little evening parties of which I have spoken, for Valentin was a visitor everywhere. He had seen Madame Delaunay, admired her, danced with her, and finally one fine day had found an opportunity to carry her a new book which she wished to read. The first visit being made, no excuse is necessary for subsequent ones, till at the end of three months one is, as it were, a member of the household; thus such matters arrange themselves. Whoever is surprised at the presence of a young man in a family where nobody visits, would be astonished to learn on what frivolous pretexts he can secure the privileges of a visitor.

You will be astonished, perhaps, madame, at the way in which Valentin did his courting. It was, in a manner, the work of chance. He had lived during the winter, according to his custom, foolishly, but gaily enough. The summer come, like the grasshopper he found himself unprovided for. This is the season when one's friends disappear ; some go to the country, some to England or to the watering-places, a puff of wind takes them away and one is left suddenly alone. If Valentin had been wiser he might have done like the rest, and set out for a vacation ; but his pleasures had been expensive and an empty purse kept him in Paris. Regretting his improvidence, and sad as one can be at twenty-five, he considered how to pass the summer, and resolved to make, if he could, not a virtue, but a pleasure, of necessity. Going out on one of those beautiful days when everything that is young goes out, without knowing why, he found on reflecting that there were only two houses he could visit ; he must see Madame de Parnes or Madame Delaunay. He visited both, and this excess of pleasure on one day left him without occupation for the next. As he could not repeat his visits at once, he wondered on what day he might venture again, after which he involuntarily passed in review and meditated upon the happenings, the conversations in which he had been both listener and talker during those two hours which had now become precious to him.

The resemblance of which I have spoken to you, and which had not struck him until then, made him smile at first. It seemed strange to him that two young women in such different positions, ignorant of each other's existence, should be sufficiently alike to be sisters. He compared in memory their features, their figures and their manners, each in turn made him like less, or admire more, the other. Madame de Parnes was stylish, lively, affected and good-humored; Madame Delaunay was all that, but not at all times, only at a ball, and in a measure she was, so to speak, more luke-warm. Poverty was no doubt the cause. The eyes of the widow, however, burned sometimes with an ardent, steady flame which seemed to indicate repose, while those of the marquise resembled a spark, brilliant, but fugitive. It is indeed the same woman, said Valentin to himself; it is the same fire, fluttering there upon a happy hearthstone, here covered with ashes. Little by little he came to the details; he thought of the white hands of the one fingering the ivory keys of her piano, and of the other's thin, tired hands falling on her knees. He thought of their feet, and found it curious that the poorer woman should be the better booted; she made her own foot gear. He saw the lady of the Chaussée d'Antin stretched in her reclining-chair with arms bare that very morning, breathing in the fragrant freshness of her garden. He wondered if Madame Delaunay had not also beautiful arms under her cotton sleeves, and I

do not know why, but he trembled at the idea of seeing Madame Delaunay's uncovered arms ; then he thought of the beautiful locks of Madame de Parnes's raven black hair and the crochet needle which Madame Delaunay stuck in her knot while talking. He took a pencil and tried to trace on paper the double image which possessed him. By rubbing out and retouching, he finally arrived at one of those distant likenesses with which fancy sometimes contents itself rather than with a too-true portrait. When he had obtained this sketch he stopped ; which did it better portray ? He could not decide, sometimes one and sometimes the other, according to the caprice of his fancy. How mysterious is destiny ! He thought, who knows, in spite of appearances, which of these two women is the happier ? Is it the richer, or the more lovely ? Is it the one who will be the more beloved ? No ! it is the one who will love better. What would they do if, to-morrow, the one should awake in the other's place ? Valentin thought of the sleeper, awakened, and, without perceiving that he himself was dreaming in broad daylight, built a thousand castles in the air. He promised himself to go the next day to make his two visits and to carry his sketch so as to see its defects ; at the same time he added, with a touch of his pencil, a curl to the hair, a fold to the dress ; enlarged the eyes, and made the contour more delicate. Once more he recalled to memory the foot and pondered over the beauty of the

hand, then remembered the white arms ; he thought also of a thousand other things ; he ended by being in love.

III

To get in love, is not difficult, but to know how to tell one's love, is. Valentin took his sketch and went out early the next day. He commenced with the marquise. By a happy chance, rarer than one would think, he found her that day just as he had dreamed of her the evening before. It was the month of July. Upon a wooden bench, heaped with fresh cushions, under a beautiful honeysuckle in full bloom, dressed in a morning gown, her arms bare, Isabelle, Marquise de Parnes, appeared to the eyes of the young man as a nymph might have looked to the eyes of Virgil's shepherd. She greeted him with one of those sweet smiles which cost so little when one has beautiful teeth, and pointed indifferently to a stool at a little distance from her. Instead of seating himself upon this stool he took it to place it nearer her while he looked for a suitable spot ; the marquise asked : "What are you doing?"

Valentin saw that in his excitement he had gone too far and that the untractable reality was going less quickly than his desires. He stopped, and placing the stool a little farther away than it was at first, sat down not knowing what to say. It should be said that a great lackey, with an insolent and sour mien, was standing before the marquise ; he presented her with a cup of hot chocolate which she sipped daintily. The presence of this third person, the extreme care which the lady took not to burn her lips and the little attention she gave to her visitor were not encouraging. Valentin took from his pocket the sketch he had made and fixing his eyes on Madame de Parnes examined attentively the original and the copy. She asked him what he was doing. He went to her, showed her the drawing and reseated himself without speaking a word. At the first glance, the marquise frowned, as one does when seeking to discover a resemblance, then nodded her head as one does when it is found. She swallowed the rest of her chocolate, the lackey took the cup and retired, and the beautiful teeth reappeared in a charming smile.

“It is prettier than I am,” she said, finally. “Did you do that from memory? How did you do it?”

Valentin replied that so beautiful a face required no posing, to be copied, that he had found the image in his heart. The marquise made a slight bow ; Valentin brought his stool nearer.

All the time, while talking of other things, Madame de Parnes looked at the drawing.

"I find," she said, "that there is a physiognomy in this portrait which is not mine. It seems to be like one who resembles me, but it is not I whom you have pictured."

Valentin blushed in spite of himself, and believed that at the bottom of his soul he loved Madame Delaunay; the observation of the marquise seemed to bear testimony of it. He looked again at his drawing, then at the marquise, then he thought of the young widow. "She whom I love," he said to himself, "is she who resembles most this portrait. Since my heart has guided my hand, my hand will explain my heart."

The conversation continued—of a race, I think, which had taken place the day before, at the Champ-de-Mars. "You are far away over there," said Madame de Parnes. Valentin got up and came toward her. "What a beautiful piece of honeysuckle," he said in passing.

The marquise stretched out her arm, broke off a little branch of the flowers and graciously offered it to him.

"Here," she said, "take this, and tell me truly if it is indeed I whose portrait you have tried to make, or if, in painting another's, you have discovered it by chance."

Impelled by a little feeling of foppery, Valentin, instead of taking the branch, laughingly presented the button-hole of his coat to the marquise, that she might

herself insert the bouquet. While, not without trouble, she graciously performed this task, Valentin stood looking at the pavilion of which I have spoken, and of which the Venetian blinds were half open. You remember that Madame de Parnes was understood never to go there. She even affected some scorn for this elegant and refined boudoir which she thought in bad taste. Valentin observed, however, that the gilded easy chairs and the costly hangings did not suffer from dust. In the midst of this furniture, in the Grecian style, superb and uncomfortable like everything of the Empire period, was a long reclining-chair, clearly modern in shape, which attracted his attention. His heart beat, I do not know why, in thinking that the beautiful marquise sometimes used this pavilion; why should this chair be there if she did not go there occasionally and sit in it? Valentin seized one of the white hands engaged in decorating him and carried it to his lips—what the marquise thought I do not know. Valentin looked at the chair; Madame de Parnes looked at the drawing, she did not withdraw her hand, he held it between his own. A servant appeared upon the steps to announce a visitor. Valentin loosed the hand of the marquise, and singularly enough she quickly closed the Venetian blind.

The lady visitor entered; Valentin was a little embarrassed, for he saw that the marquise, as if by an oversight, hid his drawing by throwing her handkerchief

over it. It was unexpected ; he adopted a bold course and raising the handkerchief took up the paper ; Madame de Parnes made a slight sign of surprise.

“I wish to retouch it,” he said in a low voice ; “permit me to take it away.”

She did not object, he placed it in his pocket and left.

He found Madame Delaunay making tapestry ; her mother was seated near her. For her garden the poor woman had only a few flowers on the window-sill. Her costume, always the same, was of a sombre color, for she had no pretty morning gown ; everything superfluous is a sign of luxury. A love of artificial elegance, however, made her wear ear-rings, in very bad taste, and an imitation gold chain. Moreover, her hair was in disorder, and this added to her habitual tired look would, you will agree, make Valentin’s comparison, at the first glance, unfavorable to her.

Valentin did not, in the presence of her mother, dare to show the drawing he had brought. But when three o’clock struck, the old lady, who had no servant, went out to prepare dinner. This was the moment he had waited for. He again drew out his portrait and tried his second experiment. The widow had not much penetration and she did not recognize herself, and Valentin, somewhat confused, was obliged to explain to her that it was she he had tried to portray. At first she appeared astonished, then delighted, and believing,

simply, that is was a present that Valentin offered her, she went to the chimney-piece and unhooked a little white wood frame, removed therefrom a frightful portrait of Napoleon, yellowed by exposure since 1810, and replaced it by her own.

Valentin let her go on ; he could not bring himself to spoil this expression of *naïve* delight. The idea, however, that Madame de Parnes would undoubtedly again ask him for the drawing, troubled him visibly. Madame Delaunay perceiving this, thought she had been indiscreet ; she paused, embarrassed, still holding the frame, yet not knowing what to do. Valentin, for his part, feeling that he had done a foolish thing in showing this portrait which he did not wish to part with, sought in vain a way out of the difficulty. After several moments of painful embarrassment Madame Delaunay left the frame and the paper on the table beside the dethroned Napoleon and took up her work.

“I would like,” at length said Valentin, “before leaving that little sketch with you, to be permitted to make a copy of it.”

“I believe I have been a little rash,” replied the widow. “Keep that drawing which belongs to you, if you value it so highly. I suppose it is your intention neither to hang it in your chamber nor show it to your friends.”

“Certainly not ; but I made it for myself, and I would not like to lose it entirely.”

“What purpose will it serve you, since you assure me that you will not show it to your friends?”

“It will serve me to behold you, madame, and to say sometimes to your image what I do not dare to say to yourself.”

Although this phrase was only a piece of gallantry, the tone in which it was said caused the widow to look up. She gave the young man a look, not too severe but serious; this look affected Valentin, already moved by his own words; he rolled up the sketch, and was going to put it in his pocket, when Madame Delaunay got up and, with an air of timid raillery, took it from his hand. He laughed, and in his turn gently took the paper away from her.

“By what right, madame, do you despoil me of my property? Does it not belong to me?”

“No,” she said, dryly, “no one has a right to make a portrait without the consent of the model.”

She sat down on saying this, and Valentin, seeing her a little agitated, drew near her and became more courageous. Whether from regret at having demonstrated the pleasure she at first felt, or from disappointment or impatience, Madame Delaunay’s hand visibly trembled. Valentin, who had so lately kissed Madame de Parnes’s hand, which had not trembled, without more reflection took the widow’s hand in his. She looked at him with a stupefied air, for it was the first time that Valentin had ever been so familiar with her.

But when she saw him lean over and raise the hand to his lips, she got up, allowed him unresistingly to imprint a lingering kiss upon her wrist and said to him with extreme sweetness :

“ My dear sir, I am sorry to leave you, but my mother needs me.”

With this compliment, she left him alone, without giving him time to retain her, and without waiting for his response. He felt very uneasy, he feared he had wounded her, he hesitated to leave, and remained standing expecting her to come back. It was the mother, however, who reappeared, seeing whom he feared that his imprudence would cost him dearly. He did simply nothing, the good woman with a most agreeable air, had come to keep him company while her daughter put on her dress to go that evening to a dance. The toilette seemed to take an unusually long time to arrange, for, after waiting some time in the hope that the fair offended would return and pardon him, Valentin was obliged to leave in ignorance of Madame Delaunay's sentiments.

Arrived at home, however, our rattlebrain found himself not too discontented with his day's adventures. He reviewed one by one the circumstances of his two visits ; just as a hunter who has dislodged a stag calculates its ambuscades, so the lover calculates his chances, and gives play to his imagination. Whatever Valentin's faults, certainly excessive modesty was not one. He

commenced by deciding for himself that the marquise was already his. Indeed, there had been no shadow of severity nor resistance on the part of Madame de Parnes. He acknowledged, however, for this very reason, that she might only have acted in a spirit of coquetry. Many beautiful women in society allow their hands to be kissed for no other reason than the Pope in allowing his toe to be kissed: it is a formal condescension; so much the better for those bound for Paradise. Valentin concluded that the prudery of the widow, in reality, promised more than did the freedom of the marquise. Madame Delaunay, after all, had not been so very rigid. She had gently drawn away her hand after his kissing it, and had gone to put on her dress. While thinking of that dress Valentin remembered the dance: it was that same evening, and he decided he would go there.

While making his toilet he perambulated his room, his imagination growing more and more excited. It was the widow he was going to see. It was she of whom he dreamed. On a table he noticed a little portfolio, an ugly thing which he had won in a lottery. The cover of this portfolio was embellished by a poor landscape in water-colors, under glass, but passably well mounted. He adroitly replaced this landscape by the portrait of Madame de Parnes; I am mistaken, I meant to say Madame Delaunay. Valentin put the portfolio in his pocket, whence he could conveniently

draw it out at the proper moment and show it to his future conquest. "What will she say?" he asked himself, "and what shall I reply?" While cogitating upon some of those prepared platitudes which one learns by heart but never uses, it occurred to him that it would be much simpler to write a formal declaration and hand it to the widow.

Then he commenced writing ; four pages were filled. Who does not know how the heart swells during those moments when yielding to the temptation to fix upon paper a perhaps transitory sentiment ; it is sweet, it is dangerous, madame, to dare to write that one loves ! The first page which Valentin wrote was a little chilly and much too legible. Each comma was severely placed, each paragraph well-marked, facts which indicate but little love. The second page was already less correct, on the third the lines covered each other, while the fourth, it must be acknowledged, was full of faults of orthography.

How can I tell you of the strange idea that came to Valentin when about to seal his letter? It was to the widow he had written, it was to her he had spoken of his love, of his kiss of the morning, of his fears and his desires, but at the moment that he put the address he saw, in re-reading it, that there was no exclusive detail in the letter, and he could not help smiling at the idea of sending it to Madame de Parnes. Perhaps there was, without his knowing it, a secret motive

which led him to carry out this odd idea. In the depths of his heart he felt himself incapable of writing such a letter to the marquise, and his heart told him at the same time that, whenever he wished, he could write another such to Madame Delaunay. He profited then by the occasion, and without further delay he sent the declaration, made to the widow, to the house in the Chaussée d'Antin.

IV

The little reunion, where Valentin was to meet Madame Delaunay, took place at the house of an old notary, named Monsieur des Andelys. He found her, as he had hoped, more beautiful and more coquettish than ever. In spite of the chain and the ear-rings her costume was almost simple. A single knot of ribbon of changeable hue suited her pretty face, and another of the same shade confined her supple and graceful waist. I have said that she was very small, a brunette, and that she had large, dark eyes; she was also a little slender and differed in that from Madame de Parnes, whose development showed a most beautiful form, with skin as clear as alabaster. To make use of an expression of the studio to convey my thought, the “ensemble”

of Madame Delaunay was *bien fondu*, that is to say, there was nothing exaggerated about her ; her hair was not very dark, and her complexion was not very fair, she looked like a little Creole. Madame de Parnes, on the contrary, was as if painted ; her cheeks had a peach-like tint which intensified the brilliancy of her eyes. Nothing was more admirable than her thick black hair draping her beautiful shoulders. But I see that I am like my hero ; when I think of one I must speak of the other, and remember that the marquise was not present on these evenings at the notary's.

When Valentin begged the widow to give him a country-dance, "I am engaged," said very curtly, was all the answer he got. He pretended that he did not understand, and answering, "thank you," was moving away, when Madame Delaunay ran after him to tell him he was mistaken.

"In that case, what country-dance will you give me?" he asked. She blushed, and not daring to refuse, she fingered a little program of the ball, on which her dances were written.

"This book deceives me," she said, hesitating, "there are several names which I have not erased and which tax my memory."

It was just the time to bring out the portfolio with the portrait, and Valentin took advantage of it. "Here," he said, "write my name upon the

first page of this album ; it will make it all the dearer to me."

Madame Delaunay recognized herself this time ; she took the portfolio, looked at the portrait, and wrote Valentin's name on the first page, and handed it back to him, saying sadly : " I must speak to you. I must say two words to you ; but I cannot dance with you."

She passed into a little adjoining room, used for card playing, Valentin followed her. She appeared exceedingly embarrassed. " What I am going to ask you," she said, " will perhaps seem to you very ridiculous, and I feel myself that you will have a right to think it so. You made me a visit this morning and you—took my hand," she added timidly. " I am not a child nor am I foolish enough not to know that it is a little thing which signifies nothing. In the great world in which you live, it is but a simple politeness ; we were, however, alone, and you were neither arriving nor saying good-bye ; you will agree, or better, you will understand, perhaps, through friendship for me—"

She stopped, partly through fear and partly embarrassed by the effort she had made. Valentin, who was terribly alarmed by this preamble, waited for her to continue, then an idea suddenly crossed his mind. He did not reflect as to what he should do, but yielding to a first impulse, cried out :

“Your mother saw it?”

“No,” replied the widow with dignity; “no, sir, my mother saw nothing.” As she uttered these words, the country-dance commenced, her partner came to claim her and she disappeared in the crowd.

Valentin waited impatiently, as you may imagine, for the country-dance to finish. The desired moment came at last, but Madame Delaunay did not return to her place and, although he tried to approach her, he could not speak to her. She did not seem to hesitate about what remained to be said to him, but thought how she would say it. Valentin asked himself a thousand questions, which all arrived at the same result: “She wishes to ask me not to come to see her any more.” He, however, revolted at such a demand, on so slight a pretext. It was more than absurd, and he saw in it either an uncalled-for severity, or a false virtue prompted by the wish to make him value her the more highly. “She is either a conceited woman or a coquette,” he said to himself. “That is the way one judges, madame, when one is only twenty-five.”

Madame Delaunay understood perfectly what was passing in the young man’s mind. She had indeed foreseen it; but in recognizing it, she had lost courage. Her intention was not, altogether, to forbid Valentin her house, but although she had little spirit she had a great deal of heart, and she had seen clearly that

morning that he was not joking, and that she was going to be attacked. Women are warned by a peculiar instinct of the approach of the combat. The majority expose themselves either because they feel that they are on their guard, or because they take pleasure in danger. Love skirmishes are the pastime of idle beauties. Knowing how to defend themselves they have, when they wish, the opportunity to protect themselves.

But Madame Delaunay was too busy, too sedentary, she saw too little of the world ; she occupied herself too much at needle-work, which allows of dreaming, nay, sometimes, makes one dream ; in a word, she was too poor to allow her hand to be kissed. She did not believe herself in any peril to-day ; but what would happen to-morrow, if Valentin spoke of love, and if, the day after, she closed her house to him, and then repented the day following ? Where would her work be all that time ? Would she by evening have executed the desired number of points ? I will explain that to you later. But what would people say in any case ? A woman who lives almost alone, is much more exposed than another. Ought she not then to be severe ? Madame Delaunay reasoned that to risk anything would be absurd, that she must cast Valentin off before her peace was disturbed. She wished to speak then, but she was a woman, and he was there ; and it is the most difficult thing in the world to combat the advantages of presence.

In a moment, after all these motives, which I have just briefly indicated, had presented themselves forcibly to her mind, she got up. Valentin was before her and their eyes met. For the last hour the young man had reflected, alone, apart, and he had also read in the great eyes of Madame Delaunay, each thought which troubled her. Sadness had succeeded his first impatience. He wondered if she were a prude or a coquette; the more he recalled of her, the more he studied the timid and pensive face before him, the greater became his respect for her. He decided that his rashness was, perhaps, more serious than he had thought. Therefore, when Madame Delaunay came to him, he knew what she was going to say; he would even spare her the trouble; but in her emotion she was too charming and he preferred to allow her to speak.

It was not without pain that she had decided to come and explain everything. Her feminine pride, under the circumstances, had to submit to a violent blow. She must confess to being impressionable and yet not let him see that she was impressed, she must declare that she had understood everything and yet appear not to have understood anything. In fact it was necessary to admit that she was afraid,—the last acknowledgment a woman makes,—and the cause of her fear was so slight! Madame Delaunay realized with her first words that there was but one way for her: to be neither weak

nor prudish, nor coquettish, nor absurd ; it was to be true. Then she spoke, and all she said may be comprised in this phrase : "Leave me ; I am afraid of loving you."

When she ceased speaking, Valentin looked at her for some time with astonishment, chagrin, and an inexpressible pleasure. I do not know what pride seized him ; it always gives one intense pleasure to feel one's heart beat. He opened his lips to answer, and a hundred replies simultaneously suggested themselves ; he was intoxicated with emotion and with the presence of a woman who dared to speak thus to him. He wished to tell her that he loved her, he wished to promise to obey her, he wished to swear never to leave her, he wished to thank her for his happiness, he wished to speak to her of his suffering ; indeed, a thousand contradictory ideas, a thousand torments, and a thousand delights crossed his mind, and in the midst of it all, he was on the point of crying out, in spite of himself : "But you love me already !"

During all these hesitations, they were dancing a galop in the parlor : it was the fashion in 1825 ; several couples had started off and made the round of the apartment ; the widow got up, she was still awaiting the reply of the young man. A curious temptation mastered him in watching the joyous circle pass him : "Ah well ! yes," he said, "I swear to you that you see me for the last time." In saying this he placed his

arm around Madame Delaunay's waist. His eyes seemed to say, "For this time only let us be friends, let us imitate them." She allowed herself to be led in silence, and soon, like two birds, they were flying to the sound of the music.

It was late, and the salon was almost empty; the card-tables were still surrounded, but it should be said that the notary's dining-room which opened into the salon was then completely deserted. The dancers went no farther than this room; they took their turn around the table, then came back to the salon. It happened, when Valentin and Madame Delaunay took their turn in the dining-room, that no dancers were following them; they found themselves then all at once alone in the midst of the ball. A quick glance backward convinced Valentin that no mirror, no door could betray him; he drew the young widow to his heart and, without saying a word, pressed his lips upon her bare shoulder. If the least cry had escaped Madame Delaunay it would have caused a frightful scandal. Happily for him his partner was prudent, but she could not be brave at the same time, and she would have fallen if he had not held her up. In going back to the salon she leaned heavily on his arm and could hardly breathe. What would he not have given to have been able to listen to the beating of that trembling heart! But the music ceased; he must go away, and whatever might be the intensity of his

feelings, whatever he might desire to say to her, Madame Delaunay would not answer him.

V

Our hero was not mistaken in fearing to count too quickly on the insensibility of the marquise. The next morning, when he was half asleep, someone brought him a note which read something as follows:

“Sir, I do not know who has given you authority to write to me in such terms. If not a mistake, it is a conceit and an impertinence. In any case, I send you back your letter which could not have been intended for me.”

Entirely occupied with a recollection more intense. Valentin had almost forgotten his declaration to Madame de Parnes. He read the note two or three times before he clearly understood its meaning. At first he was thoroughly ashamed and sought in vain for a response to it. Getting up and rubbing his eyes, his ideas became more distinct. It seemed to him that this was not the language of an offended woman. It was not thus that Madame Delaunay had expressed herself. He perused the letter she had returned to him,

and he found nothing in it which merited so much anger ; the letter was passionate, foolish perhaps, but sincere and respectful. He threw her note on the table and decided to think no more about it.

Such decisions mean very little. He would perhaps have thought no more of the note if, instead of being severe, it had been tender or only polite ; for the soirée of the previous evening had left a profound impression on the young man's soul. But anger is contagious ; Valentin commenced by wiping his razor on the note of the marquise ; then he tore it in pieces and threw it on the floor ; next he burned his declaration ; then he dressed himself and walked moodily up and down his room ; he ordered his breakfast, but could neither drink nor eat ; and finally he put on his hat and went to see Madame de Parnes.

They told him she had gone out ; wishing to know if this were true, he replied, "That is all right, I know it,"—and quickly crossed the court. The door-keeper ran after him, when he met Madame de Parnes's maid ; he accosted her, drew her aside, and without further parley, placed a louis in her hand. Madame de Parnes was at home. It was arranged with the servant that no one should have seen Valentin and that he had passed the gate-keeper unnoticed. He entered, crossed the salon and found the marquise alone in her bedroom. She seemed to him, if one must own it, a good deal less angry than her note implied. She, however, as a

matter of course, reproached him for his conduct, and asked him curtly by what chance he had dared enter unannounced. He replied naturally that he had met no servant to announce him and that he had come, in all humility, to offer his most humble apologies for his conduct.

“And what apologies can you make?” asked Madame de Parnes.

By chance Valentin remembered the scornful tone of the note; it seemed to him a good opportunity to tell her the truth of the case. He replied, that the insolent letter of which the marquise complained, had not been written for her and that it had come to her by mistake. To explain such an affair was, as you may imagine, not an easy matter. How could one write a name and an address by mistake? I do not take upon myself to explain to you why Madame de Parnes believed, or pretended to believe, what Valentin said. He told her more candidly than she expected that he was in love with a young widow, that this widow, by the most singular chance, very much resembled the marquise; that he saw her often, that he had seen her the evening before; he told her, in fact, all that he could tell, except the name and some little details which you will surmise.

It is not without precedent that a novice in love uses a fable of this kind to disguise his passion. To tell one woman that he loves another who resembles

her is a romantic plan which gives the right to speak of love ; but I believe in order to do this, it is necessary that the person with whom one employs such strategies should also be willing to speak of love : was this why the marquise listened to him ? Perhaps wounded vanity, rather than love, had actuated Valentin ; flattered vanity rather than love appeased Madame de Parnes. She even began to ask the young man some questions about his widow. She was astonished at the resemblance of which he spoke, and would be curious, she said, to judge with her own eyes. "How old is she ?" she asked. "Is she smaller or larger than I am ? is she clever ? where does she go ? do I know her ?"

To all these questions Valentin answered, as nearly as possible, truthfully. This sincerity on his part imparted to each word the air of diverted flattery. "She is neither larger nor smaller than you," he said : "she has, like you, a charming figure, like you, an incomparable foot, like you, beautiful eyes, full of fire." Conversation in this tone did not displease the marquise. While she listened with an unconcerned air, she furtively glanced at herself in the mirror. To tell the truth, this little game shocked Valentin horribly ; he could neither understand this half-virtue nor this half-hypocrisy of a woman who was angered by a frank word, yet allowed herself to be flattered thus indirectly. Seeing the tender glances which the marquise gave herself in the glass he was tempted to

tell her all, the name, the street, the kiss at the ball; and thus take his complete revenge for the note which he had received.

A question by Madame de Parnes lessened the ill-humor of the young man. She asked him, tauntingly, if he could not at least give her the Christian name of his widow. "She is called Julie," he replied immediately. There had been in this response so little hesitation and so much sincerity that Madame de Parnes was struck by it. "It is a very pretty name," she said, and the conversation stopped short.

Then an incident happened difficult to explain, but easy perhaps to understand. When the marquise actually believed that the declaration which had shocked her was really not intended for her, she seemed surprised and even wounded. Whether the fickleness of Valentin seemed too marked, if he loved another; or whether she regretted having showed anger without cause I don't know, but she became dreamy, strangely irritable and coquettish at the same time. She wished to withdraw her pardon, and while trying to pick a quarrel with Valentin she busied herself with her toilet; she untied a ribbon which was around her throat, then retied it; she put in a pin; her coiffure seemed to displease her; she replaced a curl on one side and put back one on the other; as she was arranging her tresses, the comb slipped from her hand, and the long black hair covered her shoulders.

"Would you like me to ring?" asked Valentin; "do you need your maid?"

"It isn't worth while," replied the marquise, who impatiently twisted up her fallen hair and fastened it with a comb. "I do not know what my servants are doing; they must all have gone out, for I gave orders this morning that no one was to be admitted."

"In that case," said Valentin, "I have committed an indiscretion and I will retire." He made several steps toward the door and was really going out, when the marquise, who had her back turned and apparently had not heard his reply, said to him:

"Give me the box which is on the mantelpiece."

He obeyed; she took some hairpins from the box and rearranged her hair.

"By the way, what about that portrait you made?"

"I do not know where it is," replied Valentin; "but I will find it, and when I have retouched it, I will, if you will permit, give it to you."

A servant came in with a letter which required an answer. The marquise sat down to write and Valentin went into the garden. In passing the pavilion he saw that the door was open; the chambermaid he had met on arriving came in to dust the furniture; he entered, curious to examine this mysterious boudoir which people said was abandoned. On seeing him, the girl smiled with that air of protection which all servants

take after a confidence. She was a young girl and quite pretty ; he approached her deliberately and threw himself into an armchair.

“Does your mistress never come here?” he asked with an indifferent air. The soubrette seemed to hesitate about answering ; she continued to arrange the things, then in passing before the reclining chair of modern form, of which I believe I have spoken to you, she said in a low voice :

“That is madame’s chair.”

“And why,” replied Valentin, “does madame say that she never comes here?”

“It is because the former marquise played such pranks in this pavilion. It has a bad name in the neighborhood. When anyone heard any racket they said at once : ‘It is at the Parnes’ pavilion ;’ and that is why madame denies coming here.”

“And what does madame do when she comes here?” Valentin asked again.

For her reply the soubrette slightly raised her shoulders, as much as to say : “Nothing very bad.”

Valentin looked out of the window to see if the marquise was still writing. While he spoke he had put his hand in his waistcoat pocket. It chanced that he was now in his golden vein ; a caprice of curiosity possessed him, and drawing out a new double-louis which glistened attractively in the sun, he said to the soubrette : “Hide me here.”

After what had passed the maid believed that Valentin was in favor with her mistress. To enter a woman's room without authority, there must be a certain assurance of being well received, and when, after having forced her door, one passes a half-hour in her bedroom, the servants know what to think. However, the proposition was hazardous ; to be concealed in order to surprise one is the idea of love, not of passion ; the double-louis, however beautiful, could not combat with the idea of being dismissed. But after all, thought the servant, it amounts to the same thing. Who knows ? Instead of being sent away I may, perhaps, be thanked. So she took the double-louis and laughingly showed Valentin a large screen, behind which he hid himself.

“Where are you, pray ?” asked the marquise, who came down into the garden.

The servant told her that Valentin had just gone away through the little salon. Madame de Parnes looked on all sides to assure herself that he had gone ; then she came into the pavilion, looked around, and went away, after having closed the door and locked it.

You think perhaps, madame, that I tell you an unlikely story. I know clever people in this prosaic age, who would doubt very gravely that such things are possible, and since the Revolution do not believe in people hiding themselves in a pavilion. There is only one reply to make to these incredulous ones ; it is that they have doubtless forgotten the time when they were in love.

When Valentin found himself alone, he very naturally thought that he was, perhaps, going to pass the whole day there. When his curiosity was satisfied and after he had examined at his leisure the gildings, the hangings and the furniture, he found himself, with a great appetite, opposite to a sugar dish and a carafe.

I have told you that the note in the morning had kept him from breakfasting ; but he had now no motive for not dining. He ate two or three lumps of sugar, and recalled the old countryman who on being asked if he liked the ladies, replied, "I like a pretty girl well enough, but I like a good cutlet better." Valentin thought of the festivals which the soubrette had said this pavilion had witnessed, and at the sight of the beautiful round table which occupied the centre of the room, wished he could evoke the spectre of those little suppers of the defunct marquis. "How nice it would be here," he said to himself, "on an evening, or a summer night, the windows open, the Venetian blinds closed, the candles lighted and the table served. What happy times those were when our ancestors had only to strike the floor with the foot in order to have a good repast spring, as it were, from the ground." And in speaking thus Valentin struck his foot ; but nothing responded except the echo of the arched roof and the moaning of an unstrung harp.

The noise of a key in the keyhole made him return precipitately to his screen : was it the marquise or the

The Two Mistresses Chapter V

Dominated by this thought, he took a little piece of sugar which still remained of his repast, and concealing himself behind the marquise, he let it fall on her hand; she did not move.



maid? The latter could release him or at least give him a piece of bread. You will accuse me of romancing if I tell you that at that moment he could not have said which he wished to see the more.

It was the marquise who appeared. What was she going to do? Curiosity was so strong that every other idea vanished. Madame de Parnes drew out the table; she did exactly what Valentin had dreamed of a little while before; she opened the window, closed the Venetian blinds and lighted two candles. The daylight was beginning to fade. She placed the book which she held, upon the table, trilled a little and seated herself under a canopy.

“What is she going to do?” Valentin repeated. In spite of the opinion of the servant, he could not help hoping to discover some mystery. “Who knows, perhaps she expects someone? I shall find myself playing a pretty rôle, if a third person is going to arrive.” The marquise opened her book haphazard, then closed it and seemed to reflect. The young man thought she watched the screen through the half-open door. He followed all her movements; and all at once a queer idea struck him; had the servant spoken to her? did the marquise know that he was there?

A rather foolish idea, you will say, and above all very unlikely. How can one suppose that after his note, the marquise, knowing of the young man’s presence, would not have had him put out of the house? or at least she

would not have come there herself. I commence, madame, by assuring you that I am of the same opinion as you ; but I ought to add, in order to acquit my conscience, that I do not promise, under any pretext, to explain ideas of this kind. There are people who always suppose, and others who never suppose. The duty of a historian is to recount and leave it to those whom it amuses, to think.

All I can say is, it is evident that Valentin's declaration had displeased Madame de Parnes ; that it is probable she thought no more about it ; that according to all appearances she believed he had gone away ; that it is probable she had dined well and that she came to take her siesta in the pavilion ; but it is certain that she commenced by putting first one of her feet upon the sofa, then the other, she placed a cushion under her head, and languidly closed her eyes ; it was difficult after that not to believe that she slept.

Valentin wished, as Valmont said, to try to pass for a dream. He pushed away the screen ; a creaking made him tremble ; the marquise had opened her eyes, she raised her head and looked around her. Valentin did not stir, as you may imagine. Hearing nothing more and having seen nothing, Madame de Parnes went to sleep again ; the young man advanced on tip-toe, his heart beating so that he hardly breathed ; he came, like Robert le Diable, toward the sleeping Isabelle.

Ordinarily, under such circumstances one does not reflect. Never had Madame de Parnes looked so beautiful ; her half-opened lips seemed more ruby-tinted than usual ; and a more vivid carnation colored her cheeks. Her regular and peaceful breathing gently raised her bosom, beautiful as alabaster, and covered with delicate lace. The chisel of Michael Angelo could not produce from a block of Carrara marble, an Angel of Night more beautiful. Certainly, even in being offended, such a woman surprised thus, ought to pardon the desire which she inspires. A slight movement of the marquise, however, stopped Valentin. Was she asleep ? This strange doubt troubled him in spite of himself. " And what does it matter ? " he said to himself ; " is this then a snare ? What folly ! why should love lose its value in perceiving that it is shared ? What more granted, what more true, than a half-lie which one can see through. What more beautiful than she, if she slept ? What more charming if she were pretending to sleep ? "

All the while he was saying this he remained immobile, he tried to think of some way of ascertaining the truth. Dominated by this thought, he took a little piece of sugar which still remained of his repast and concealing himself behind the marquise he let it fall on her hand ; she did not move. He pushed a chair, gently at first, then more strongly ; no response. He stretched out his arm and let the book, which

Madame de Parnes had left on the table, fall on the floor. He really thought she would awaken this time, and he jumped behind the screen ; but nothing stirred. He got up and as the half-open blind exposed the marquise to the night air, he closed it with precaution.

You understand, madame, that I was not in the pavilion, and from the moment that the blind was shut it was impossible for me to see more.

VI

It was about fifteen days after this that Valentin, on leaving Madame Delaunay's, forgot his handkerchief which he had left upon an armchair. After he had gone Madame Delaunay took up the handkerchief, and having by chance looked for the mark, she found an I and a P very delicately embroidered. These were not the initials of Valentin ; to whom then could this handkerchief belong ? The name of Isabelle de Parnes had never been mentioned in the Rue Plat d'Etain, and the widow consequently was lost in vain conjectures. She turned the handkerchief on all sides, examined each corner as if she hoped somewhere to discover the real name of the owner.

And why, you ask me, so much curiosity about so simple a thing? One borrows every day a handkerchief from a friend and one loses it ; that goes without saying. What is there extraordinary in that? However, Madame Delaunay examined closely the fine cambric and found a feminine air about it which made her shake her head. She understood embroidery, and this seemed to her too rich to belong to a young man's wardrobe. An unforeseen incident discovered the truth to her. In the folds of the handkerchief she saw that one of the corners had been tied up to serve as a purse, and you know this method of carrying money is practised only by women. She grew pale at this discovery, and after having looked thoughtfully at the handkerchief for some time, she had to use it to wipe away a tear which stole down her cheek.

A tear ! you will say, already a tear ! Alas ! yes, madame, she wept. How did it happen ? I am going to tell you, but it is necessary for a moment to retrace our steps.

You must know that two days after the ball, Valentin went to see Madame Delaunay. Her mother opened the door to him and told him that her daughter had gone out. Madame Delaunay had thereupon written a long letter to the young man ; she recalled their last interview, and begged him not to come again to see her. She counted upon his word, his honor and his friendship. She did not seem angry and did not speak

of the galop. In short, Valentin read this letter in all ways and found in it neither too much nor too little. He felt touched by it; he would have obeyed its demands, if the last word had not been there. It is true this last word had been rubbed out, but so lightly that it could be seen plainly. "Adieu," said the young widow, in ending her letter, "may you be happy."

What do you think, madame, of saying to a lover whom you banish, "May you be happy?" Is it not to say, "I am not happy?" Friday came and Valentin hesitated a long time as to whether he should go to the notary's or not. In spite of his age and his rashness, the idea of harming anyone was insupportable to him. He did not know how to decide, then he repeated to himself, "May you be happy," and he ran to Monsieur des Andelys'.

Why was Madame Delaunay there? When our hero entered the salon he saw her frown with a singular expression. For those who remark such things there was some coquetry about her, but at the bottom of her heart no one was more simple, more inexperienced than Madame Delaunay. She had tried, on seeing danger, to defend herself, but she had not the necessary weapons to resist a determined struggle. She knew nothing of those clever intrigues, those ever-ready resources of women of the world who know how to hold a lover in leash, and send him off or recall him at will. When Valentin had kissed her hand, she had thought, "This

is a bad fellow of whom it is possible to become enamored, I must send him away at once." But now when she saw him at the notary's, entering gaily on tip-toe, well dressed, a smile on his lips, and saluting her, in spite of her orders, with a gracious respect, she thought, "Here is a man more determined and more cunning than I. I will not be stronger than he, and since he comes back, perhaps he really loves me."

This time she did not refuse him the quadrille he demanded. In her first words he recognized in her a great resignation and considerable disquietude. In the depths of this timid and upright soul was a certain weariness of life; while desiring repose, she was tired of solitude. Monsieur Delaunay, who died very young, had not loved her; he had taken her as housekeeper rather than as wife, and although she had no dot, he had made in marrying her what is called a sensible marriage. Economy, order, care, public esteem, the friendship of her husband, in a word, she possessed all the domestic virtues, this was all the world to her. Valentin had in Monsieur des Andelys' salon the reputation which any young man with a good tailor can have at the house of a notary. They spoke of him as an *élégant* dressed by Tortoni, and the little cousins whispered among themselves, stories of another world which were attributed to him. He had come into a baroness's room by the chimney, he had leaped from a

duchess's window, who lived on the fifth floor, all for love and without hurting himself, etc., etc.

Madame Delaunay had too much good sense to listen to this nonsense, but it would have been better perhaps to listen to it all than to hear a few words of it by chance. All depends often, here below, on the point of view which is presented to us. Or to speak more scholarly, Valentin had the advantage of Madame Delaunay. She waited for him to ask pardon for having come, in order to reproach him for coming. You may be sure he did no such thing. If he had been what she believed him to be, a man of means, he would not, perhaps, have succeeded with her, for then she would have felt that he was too able and too sure of her; but he trembled in touching her, and this proof of love, added to a little fear, troubled both the head and heart of the young woman. All this time there had been no question of the dining-room scene, and they both seemed to have forgotten it, but when the galop commenced and Valentin came to invite the widow, they had to remember it.

He assured me, that in all his life, he had never seen a more beautiful face than Madame Delaunay's when he gave her this invitation. Her forehead and cheeks were suffused with blushes; all the blood in her heart seemed to flow to her face and make her large black eyes flame. She half raised herself, ready to accept and yet not daring to; a slight quivering made her shoulders,

which this time were covered, tremble. Valentin took her hand and pressed it gently in his own, as much as to say : “ Fear nothing, I feel that you love me.”

Have you ever reflected on the position of a woman who pardons a kiss which has been taken surreptitiously ? From the moment that she consents to forget it, it is as if she had given it. Valentin now dared to reproach Madame Delaunay for her anger, to complain of her severity in wishing to send him away from her ; and finally he came, not without hesitation, to speak to her of a little garden situated behind his house, a retired place densely shaded where no indiscreet eye could penetrate. There, a cool cascade, by its murmurs, protected conversation, and solitude guarded love. No noise, no witness, no danger. To speak of such a place in a crowd, within the sound of music, 'mid the din of a festival to a young woman who listens to you, who neither accepts nor refuses, but who allows you to speak—who smiles—ah ! madame, to speak thus of such a place is perhaps sweeter than to be there.

While Valentin spoke without reserve, the widow listened without reflection. From time to time she opposed a timid objection to his ardent words ; from time to time she feigned not to hear, and if a word escaped her, in blushing she made him repeat it. Her hand, pressed by the young man, instead of being cold and still, was restless and burning. Chance, which serves lovers, required that they should pass around by

the dining-room, and they found themselves alone as on the last occasion. Valentin did not dream of troubling the reverie of his partner and in the place of passion, Madame Delaunay recognized love. What shall I say? this respect, this audacity, this room, this ball, the occasion all united to seduce her. She half closed her eyes, sighed—and promised nothing.

There, madame, you see now why Madame Delaunay wept when she found the handkerchief of the marquise.

VII

Because Valentin had forgotten this handkerchief, you must not suppose that he had no other in his pocket.

While Madame Delaunay wept, our rascal, who knew nothing about it, was a long way from weeping. He was in a little wainscoted salon, gilded and perfumed like a sweetmeat-box, in the depths of a great violet damask armchair. He was listening, after a good dinner, to Weber's *Invitation to the Waltz*, and while taking excellent coffee he watched, from time to time, the white throat of Madame de Parnes. She, in all her finery,—and, as Hoffmann says, exalted by a cup of

tea, well sugared,—was doing her best with her beautiful hands. It was not simple music, and we must acknowledge in all justice that she managed it perfectly. I do not know which merited the greatest eulogy : the sentimental German master, the intelligent musician, or the admirable instrument, which gave back in sonorous vibrations the double inspiration which animated it.

The selection finished, Valentin got up, and drawing from his pocket a handkerchief, “I thank you,” he said to Madame de Parnes, “here is the handkerchief you lent me.”

The marquise did just what Madame Delaunay had done. She looked at once at the mark ; her delicate hand had discovered that the tissue was too coarse to belong to her. She also understood embroidery, but there was hardly any on it, only enough to denote that it belonged to a woman. She turned it over two or three times, brought it timidly to her nose, looked at it again and then threw it to Valentin, saying : “You are mistaken, that belongs to some chambermaid of your mother.”

Valentin, who had unwittingly brought away Madame Delaunay’s handkerchief, recognized it, and his heart beat violently. “Why to a chambermaid?” he asked. But the marquise had reseated herself at the piano ; a rival who used coarse linen was of small importance to her. She went on with the waltz and pretended not to hear.

This indifference piqued Valentin. He walked around the room, and then took up his hat.

"Where are you going?" asked Madame de Parnes.

"Home, to give the chambermaid the handkerchief she lent me."

"Shall I see you to-morrow? We are going to have a little music and I will be pleased to have you come to dinner."

"No. I am engaged for the whole day."

He continued his walk, undecided about going out. The marquise got up and went toward him.

"You are a queer fellow," she said, "I suppose you would like to see me jealous."

"I? not at all. Jealousy is a sentiment that I detest."

"Why then are you angry that I find in this handkerchief the air of a chambermaid? Is it my fault or yours?"

"I am not angry at it and I think it very natural."

In speaking thus, he turned his back. Madame de Parnes stole up softly, seized the handkerchief of Madame Delaunay, and approaching an open window threw it into the street.

"What are you doing?" cried Valentin, and he rushed forward to stop her, but he was too late.

"I wish to know," said the marquise, laughing, "how much you prize it, and I am curious to see you go down there to look for it."

Valentin hesitated an instant and blushed with indignation. He wished to punish the marquise with some cutting response, but, as is often the case, anger took away his wits. Madame de Parnes laughed heartily. He put on his hat, jammed it on his head and went out, saying: "I am going to look for it."

In fact, he did look a long time; but a lost handkerchief is soon picked up, and it was in vain that he came back ten times from one post to another. The marquise at the window laughed all the time while watching him. Tired at length, and a little ashamed, he went away without raising his head, pretending not to be conscious that he was observed. At the corner of the street, however, he turned and saw Madame de Parnes, who did not laugh now, but followed him with her gaze.

He continued his route without knowing where he was going and mechanically took his way to the Rue du Plat d'Etain. The evening was beautiful and the air pure. The widow also was at her window; she had passed a very sad day.

"I need to be reassured," she said to him as soon as he had entered. "To whom belongs the handkerchief that you left here?"

There are people who know how to deceive, who do not know how to lie. At this question, Valentin was too evidently troubled for it to be possible for him to attempt, and without waiting for him to reply:

"Listen to me," said Madame Delaunay. "You know now that I love you. You are acquainted with a great many people and I see no one; it is also impossible for me to know what you do, but if you chose, it would be easy for you to see clearly my least actions. You could deceive me easily and without fearing the consequences, since I can neither watch you nor cease to love you; remember, I beg of you, what I am going to say: all will be known sooner or later, and believe me, it is a sad thing."

Valentin tried to interrupt her, but she took his hand and continued:

"I do not put it strongly enough, it is not only a sad thing, but it is the saddest thing in the world. If nothing is sweeter than the remembrance of happiness, nothing is more frightful than to find out that a past happiness was a deception. Have you never thought what it must be to hate those whom one has loved? Can you conceive anything worse? Reflect on that, I beseech you. Those who find pleasure in deceiving others usually become vain. They imagine thereby, that they are superior to their dupes; it is very transitory and to what does it lead? Nothing is so easy as wrong-doing. A man of your age can deceive his mistress just to pass the time, but time slips away, the truth comes and what remains? A poor abused creature has believed herself loved, happy, she has made of you her

ideal ; think what happens to her if she must learn to have a horror of you !'

The simplicity of this language had moved Valentin to the depths of his heart.

"I love you," he said to her, "do not doubt it. I love you only."

"I need to believe it," replied the widow, "and if you speak truly let us never speak again of what I have suffered to-day. Permit me, however, to add one word which it is absolutely necessary for me to tell you. I saw my father at the age of sixty, learn all at once that a friend of his youth had deceived him in an affair of business. A letter had been found in which this friend himself related his perfidy and boasted of the unfortunate cunning with which he had obtained several bank notes to our detriment. I saw my father, broken and stupefied with grief, with bowed head, read this letter ; he was as ashamed as if he had been guilty himself ; he wiped a tear from his cheek, threw the letter in the fire and cried : 'Vainglory and profit are small things to lose, but how horrible it is to lose a friend !' If you had been there, Valentin, you would have taken an oath never to deceive any one."

In saying these words Madame Delaunay dropped a few tears. Valentin was seated near her, and for his only response drew her to him ; she placed her head on his shoulder and taking from the pocket of her apron the marquise's handkerchief, said :

“It is so pretty ; the embroidery on it is so fine : you will leave it with me, will you not ? The woman to whom it belongs will never discover that she has lost it. When one has such a handkerchief, one has a great many others. I have only a dozen and they are nothing remarkable. You will give me back mine which you took away and which can be no honor to you ; but I will keep this.”

“What for ?” replied Valentin. “You cannot use it.”

“Yes, my friend ; I must have something to console me for having found it on that armchair, and I must wipe away the tears which have not ceased to flow until now.”

“Let this kiss wipe them away !” cried the young man. Then taking Madame de Parnes’s handkerchief, he threw it out of the window.

VIII

Six weeks had rolled away. It must be very difficult for a man to know himself, for Valentin did not yet know which of his two mistresses he loved the better. In spite of his moments of sincerity, and uplifting of

the heart which carried him away when near Madame Delaunay, he could not persuade himself to unlearn the way to the Chaussée d'Antin. In spite of the beauty of Madame de Parnes, her cleverness, her grace and all the pleasures he found at her house, he could not renounce the little room in the Rue du Plat d'Etain. Valentin's little garden saw in turn the widow and the marquise walking arm-in-arm with the young man, and the murmur of the cascade protected with its unchanging voice, the always repeated, always deceitful oaths, uttered with the same ardor. Must one then believe that inconstancy has its pleasures as well as constancy? Sometimes one could still hear the carriage (without livery), which took Madame de Parnes away incognito, when Madame Delaunay appeared veiled, at the corner of the street, walking with a timid step. Concealed behind the lattice, Valentin smiled at these meetings, and gave himself up without remorse to the dangerous allurements of the turn of events.

It is an almost infallible fact that those who familiarize themselves with danger end by loving it. Always exposed to seeing his double intrigue discovered by some chance, obliged to play the difficult rôle of a man who had to lie without ceasing, without ever betraying himself, our rash fellow felt proud of his strange position, and after having accustomed his heart to it, his vanity required it. Fears which had at first troubled him, scruples which had stopped him, became dear to

him. He presented two rings just alike, to his two friends, he obtained for Madame Delaunay a light gold chain which he had chosen in place of the gold-plated necklace which she wore. It amused him to put this necklace on the marquise, and he succeeded one day when she was going to a ball, which was certainly the greatest proof of love that she had yet given him.

Madame Delaunay, beguiled by love, could not believe that Valentin was inconstant. There were certain days, though, when the truth appeared to her all at once, clear and positive. Then she broke forth in reproaches, dissolved in tears, and wished to die ; but a word from her lover reassured her, a pressure of the hand consoled her, and she went home tranquil and happy.

Madame de Parnes, beguiled by pride, sought to discover nothing and tried to know nothing. She said : “It is some old mistress whom he has not the courage to leave.” She did not deign to lower herself to demand a sacrifice. Love seemed to her a pastime ; jealousy, ridiculous ; she believed, besides, that her beauty was a talisman which nothing could resist.

If you remember, madame, the character of our hero as I have tried to paint it in the first pages of this story, you will understand and, perhaps, excuse his conduct, blamable though it certainly was. The double love which he felt, or believed that he felt, was, so to speak, the image of his entire life. Having always sought

extremes, enjoying the pleasures of the poor and those of the rich at the same time, he found in these two women the contrast which pleased him, and he was really rich and poor in the same day. If at seven or eight o'clock, at sunset, two beautiful gray horses entered the avenue of the Champs-Elysées drawing gently behind them a coupé lined with silk like a boudoir, you would perhaps have seen in the depths of this carriage a fresh and well-dressed figure concealed under a long cloak, smiling upon a young man stretched unconcernedly beside her; it was Valentin and Madame de Parnes who took the air after dinner. If in the morning, at sunrise, chance had led you near the beautiful woods of Romainville, you would have encountered there under the green arbor of a public garden, two lovers speaking in low tones, or reading together *La Fontaine*; it would be Valentin and Madame Delaunay, who came to walk in the dew of the morning. Were you last evening at a grand ball at the Austrian ambassador's? Did you see in the midst of a brilliant circle of young women a beauty more proud, more courted, more disdainful than all the others? That charming head, wearing a golden turban, as gracefully poised as a rose rocked by the zephyr, it is that of the young marquise, whom the crowd admires, whom success beautifies, who, however, seems to dream. Not far away, leaning against a column, Valentin watches her; no one knows their secret, no one can interpret the glance which passes

between them or divine the joy of the lover. The splendor of the lights, the sound of the music, the murmur of the crowd, the perfume of the flowers, all penetrate, transport him, while the radiant image of his beautiful mistress fascinates his dazzled eyes. He almost doubts his own happiness, that so rare a treasure belongs to him. He hears the men all around him say : "What brilliancy ! what a smile ! what a woman !" and he repeats these words in a whisper to himself. The supper hour arrives ; a young officer blushing with pleasure presents his hand to the marquise, they crowd around her, they follow her ; each wishes to approach and sue for the favor of a word escaped from her lips ; it is then that she passes near to Valentin and whispers in his ear, "To-morrow." What joy in such a word ! To-morrow nevertheless, at nightfall, the young man gropes his way up an unlighted staircase ; he arrives with a great deal of trouble at the third floor, and knocks gently at a little door ; it is opened and he goes in. Madame Delaunay at her table is working alone and waiting for him. He sits down near her ; she looks at him, takes his hand and tells him that she thanks him for still loving her. A single lamp feebly lights the modest little room ; but under that lamp is a friendly face, peaceful and kindly ; there is no one else there, no busy witnesses, no admiration, no triumph ; but Valentin does not regret the outside world, nay more, he forgets it. The old mother comes in and sits

in her armchair, and he has to listen until ten o'clock to stories of her past, to caress the little dog which growls at him and to relight the lamp which is going out. Sometimes it is a new novel which he must have the courage to read ; Valentin lets the book fall in order to squeeze his mistress's little foot in picking it up ; sometimes he has to play piquet with the good woman at two sous the counter, and he must take care not to play too well. In going out from there the young man walks ; last night he drank champagne with his supper, and tripped a quadrille ; this evening he sups with a cup of milk while making some verses for his lady-love. All this time the marquise is furious because he has broken his word ; a great powdered lackey brings him a note full of tender reproaches and smelling of musk ; the seal is broken, the window is open, the weather is beautiful, Madame de Parnes is coming and behold our reckless one as the fine gentleman again. Thus, always inconsistent, he found means of being genuine by never being sincere, and so the lover of the marquise was not the lover of the widow.

"And why choose between them?" he said to me one day when we were walking together and he sought to justify himself. "Why this obligation to love in an exclusive manner? Can one blame a man of my age for being in love with Madame de Parnes? Is she not admired, envied? does not everyone praise her

intellect and her charms? Reason itself must be fired with a passion for her. On the other hand what reproach can it be to one to be touched by the goodness, the tenderness and the candor of Madame Delaunay? Is she not worthy to make man's happiness and joy? Less beautiful would she not be a precious friend, and as she is could there be in the world a more charming mistress? In what am I culpable to love these two women if each merits love? And if I am fortunate enough to count for something in their lives, why should I render one of them happy by making the other miserable? Why should the sweet smile which my presence awakens sometimes on the lip of my beautiful widow be bought at the price of a tear from the marquise? Is it their fault that chance has thrown me in their way, that I have approached them, that they have permitted me to love them? Which could I choose without being unjust? In what would one more than the other merit to be preferred or abandoned? When Madame Delaunay tells me that her entire existence belongs to me, how should I respond? Ought I to repulse her, disabuse her and leave her to discouragement and sorrow? When Madame de Parnes is at the piano and, seated behind her, I see her yield to the noble inspiration of her heart; when her spirit raises mine, exalts me and makes me taste through sympathy the most exquisite joys of the intellect, must I say to her that she is deceived and that so sweet a

pleasure is wrong? Must I change to hate or scorn the remembrance of those delicious hours? No, my friend, I would lie if I said to either of them that I no longer love her or that I have not loved her; I would rather lose them both than choose between them."

You see, madame, he did what all men do; not being able to correct his fault he tried to give it the appearance of right. However, there were certain days when his heart in spite of himself refused to play the double rôle. He tried to trouble the repose of Madame Delaunay as little as possible; but the pride of the marquise had more than one caprice to support. "That woman is made up of spirit and pride," he sometimes said to me. It happened also that on leaving the salon of Madame de Parnes, the simplicity of the widow made him smile and he found that on her side she had too little pride and spirit. He complained of a lack of liberty. When a whim made him renounce a rendezvous, he would take a book and go to dine alone in the country. Then he would curse the chance that opposed itself to an interview which he demanded. Madame Delaunay was the one whom, in the bottom of his heart, he preferred; but he did not know it himself, and this singular uncertainty would perhaps have lasted a long time if a circumstance, small in itself, had not suddenly enlightened him as to his true sentiments.

It was the month of June and the evenings in the garden were delicious. The marquise seating herself one day on a wooden bench near the cascade, said she found it very hard.

"I will make you a present of a cushion," she said to Valentin.

In truth, the next morning there arrived an elegant easy chair accompanied with a beautiful cushion in tapestry from Madame de Parnes.

You remember perhaps that Madame Delaunay made tapestry. For a month past Valentin had seen her working constantly at a piece of this kind, the design of which he had admired; not that it was anything remarkable; it was, I believe, a wreath of flowers, like all other tapestries, but the colors were charming. Besides, we always think that the work of a loved hand is a masterpiece. A hundred times during the evening, seated near the lamp, the young man had followed, with his eyes upon the canvas, the skilful hands of the widow; a hundred times in the midst of their love-communion, he had stopped, observing a religious silence, while she counted the stitches; a hundred times he had interrupted that tired hand and strengthened it by the pressure of a kiss.

After the marquise's chair had been carried, at Valentin's request, into a little hall adjoining the garden, he went down to examine his present. Looking closely at the cushion he thought it not unfamiliar; he took it,

turned it over, put it back in its place and asked himself where he had seen it. "What a goose I am!" he said; "all cushions resemble each other and this one is nothing extraordinary." But a little stain upon the white background attracted his attention; he could not be mistaken; he had made that stain himself; one evening when writing near her, he had spilled a drop of ink on Madame Delaunay's work.

This discovery, as you may imagine, threw him into a state of great astonishment. "How is it possible?" he asked himself; "how can the marquise have sent me a cushion made by Madame Delaunay?" He looked at it again: all doubt vanished, those were the same flowers, the same colors. He recognized the arrangement; he even touched them to assure himself that he was not deceived by an illusion; then he remained speechless, not knowing how to explain what he saw.

I can only say that a thousand conjectures, each more unreasonable than the other, presented themselves to his mind. Sometimes he supposed that chance had made it possible for the widow and the marquise to meet, that they had compared notes and had sent him this cushion with common accord, in order to tell him that his perfidy was unmasked; sometimes he imagined that Madame Delaunay had overheard his conversation of the evening before in the garden, and in order to

make him ashamed she had fulfilled the promise of Madame de Parnes. On every side he saw that he was discovered and abandoned by his two mistresses or, at least, by one of them. After dreaming for an hour he determined to decide this uncertainty. He went to see Madame Delaunay, who received him as usual, only her face expressed a little surprise at his arriving so early in the morning.

Reassured at once by his reception, he spoke some time of insignificant things ; then, dominated by uneasiness, he asked the widow if her tapestry were finished. "Yes," she replied. "Where is it then?" he asked. At this question Madame Delaunay blushed and seemed embarrassed. "I took it to the merchant," she said, quickly. Then she added: "I have taken it to be mounted ; they are going to send it back to me."

If Valentin was surprised on recognizing the cushion he was more so on seeing the widow so embarrassed in speaking of it. Not daring, however, to ask more questions for fear of betraying himself, he went away at once and called on the marquise. But this visit explained even less to him ; when the cushion was spoken of, Madame de Parnes made, by way of reply, a slight movement of her head smiling as much as to say : "I am charmed that it pleases you."

Our hero went home less uneasy, it is true, than when he went out, but almost believing that he had been dreaming. What mystery or what caprice of chance

was concealed in this singular gift? “One makes a cushion and the other gives it to me; one passes a month in working and when the work is done, it belongs to the other; these two women have never seen each other, and yet they have secret intelligence with each other to play me a trick of which they do not seem to have an inkling.” There was surely enough in it to torture the mind; the young man sought in a hundred different ways the key to the enigma which tormented him.

On examining the cushion, he found the address of the merchant who had sold it. Upon a little piece of paper attached to one corner, was written: *Au Père de Famille, Rue Dauphine.*

No sooner had Valentin read these words than the truth came to him. He ran to the shop of the “*Père de Famille*;” he asked if there had not been sold that morning to a lady, a cushion in tapestry which he designated and they recognized. To the questions which followed as to who had made this cushion, and where it came from they replied guardedly; they did not know the workwoman; there were so many objects of this kind in the shop; in fact they did not wish to say anything more.

In spite of this reticence, Valentin had soon discovered in the answers of the clerk whom he questioned a mystery which he had not suspected, and of which a great many others are ignorant; it is that there are in

Paris a great number of women, poor young ladies who, while holding a good place in society and sometimes a distinguished place, work in secret for their living. The merchants thus employ these skilful workers very cheaply. Many a family living quietly, at whose house one goes to take a cup of tea, is sustained by the daughters of the house ; you see them eternally with a needle in their hand, but they are not rich enough to keep what they make ; when they have embroidered on tulle they sell it to buy calico. This one, a daughter of noble ancestors proud of her title and her birth, marks handkerchiefs ; that one, whom you admire at the ball, so joyous, so daintily dressed and so nimble, makes artificial flowers and pays for her mother's bread by her work ; that other, less poor, seeks to gain something to add to her toilet ; those trimmed hats, those embroidered sachets which you see spread out in the shops, for sale, are the secret, the sometimes holy work of an unknown hand. Few men would consent to this means of work ; in such a case they would remain poor through pride, but very few women refuse it when they are in need, and when they avail themselves of it they are not ashamed of it. It may happen that a young woman meets a friend of her childhood who is not rich and who is in need of money. Being unable to lend her money herself, she tells her of this resource, encourages her, cites examples to her, takes her to the merchant who builds up quite a business for her.

Three months afterwards the friend is in easy circumstances and renders the same service to another. These things happen every day, and no one is the wiser, which is all the better, for the idle praters who blush at work soon find a means of dishonoring that which is of all things most honorable.

“About how long,” asked Valentin, “does it take to make such a cushion as the one of which I speak, and how much does the maker earn by it?”

“To make such a cushion as that, sir, must take two months, certainly six weeks. The worker pays for her worsted of course, in consequence, that is so much less for her. Fine English worsted costs ten francs a pound; the scarlet and cherry cost fifteen francs. For that cushion a pound and a half of worsted, or more, was necessary, and it will leave forty or fifty francs for the skilful worker.”

IX

When Valentin returned home and found himself confronted by his easy chair, the secret which he had just learned produced an unexpected effect on him. That Madame Delaunay had put six weeks into making

that cushion to gain two louis, and that Madame de Parnes had bought it in taking a pleasure walk, the thought communicated a strange pang to Valentin's heart. The difference which destiny had put between these two women was demonstrated to him in that moment in so palpable a form that he could not help suffering in contemplating it. The idea that the marquise would arrive soon and seat herself on this chair, and rest her bare arm on the traces of the widow's tears was insupportable to the young man. He took the cushion and put it in a wardrobe: "She may think what she likes," he said, "that cushion makes me unhappy and I cannot leave it there."

Madame de Parnes came soon afterwards and expressed astonishment at not seeing her gift. Instead of seeking some excuse, Valentin replied that he did not want it, and that he would never use it. He pronounced these words most brusquely and without considering what he was saying.

"And why?" asked the marquise.

"Because it displeases me."

"In what does it displease you? You told me the contrary only this morning."

"That is possible, but it displeases me now. How much did it cost you?"

"That is a pretty question!" said Madame de Parnes; "what thought possesses you now?"

You must know that several days before, Valentin had heard from Madame Delaunay's mother that she was much pressed for money. She was harassed to pay her rent to an avaricious proprietor who threatened them in case of the least delay. They would not listen to Valentin's offers of help, therefore, being unable to perform the most trifling service for them, he could only conceal his anxiety. After what the clerk at the *Père de Famille* had told him, it was probable that the cushion had not sufficed to relieve the widow from her embarrassment. That was not the marquise's fault, but human nature is sometimes so perverse that the young man almost had a spite against Madame de Parnes on account of the moderate price of her purchase, and did not perceive the unconventional nature of his question.

"That cost you forty or fifty francs," he said with bitterness. "Do you know how much time it takes to make it?"

"I know all the better," replied the marquise, "that I made it myself."

"You!"

"Yes, I, and for you I have worked fifteen days on it; you see that you owe me some acknowledgment."

"Fifteen days, madame? Why it takes two months, and two months of assiduous labor, to complete such a piece of work. It would take you six months to finish it if you undertook it."

"You seem to know all about it; from whence comes all this knowledge?"

"From a workwoman whom I know and who certainly is not mistaken about it."

"Well, this workwoman did not tell you all. You do not know that for those things the most important part is the flowers, and that one can buy at the shops, the canvas prepared with the background all filled in; the most difficult part remains to be done, but the longest and most tiresome part is done. That was how I bought that cushion, and it did not cost me forty or fifty francs either, for the background amounts to nothing; that is a mere mechanical work for which only wool and a pair of hands are necessary."

The word *mechanical* had not pleased Valentin.

"I am very sorry," he replied, "but neither the background nor the flowers are your work."

"And whose then? apparently the workwoman whom you know?"

"Perhaps."

The marquise seemed to hesitate an instant between giving way to anger and an inclination to laugh. She yielded to the latter and abandoned herself to gaiety.

"Tell me then," she cried, "tell me then, I pray you, the name of your mysterious worker who gives you such good information?"

"Her name is Julie," replied the young man. His look, the tone of his voice recalled all at once to Madame de Parnes that he had given her the same name one day when he had spoken of a widow whom he loved. As then, the air of truth with which he had replied troubled the marquise, she remembered vaguely the history of this widow whom she had regarded as a myth; but this name now repeated presented itself seriously.

"If this is a confidence which you repose in me," she said, "it is neither adroit nor polite."

Valentin did not reply. He felt that his first impulse had led him too far, and he began to reflect. The marquise on her side, remained silent for some time. She awaited an explanation, and Valentin thought of a means to avoid giving one. He had finally decided to speak, and to try to retract perhaps, when the marquise losing patience, got up abruptly.

"Is this a quarrel or a final rupture?" she asked in so violent a tone that Valentin was unable to maintain his coolness.

"As you like," he replied.

"Very well," said the marquise and she went out. But five minutes after some one rang the bell. Valentin opened the door and saw Madame de Parnes standing on the platform, her arms crossed, enveloped in her cloak and leaning against the wall; she was frightfully pale and ready to swoon. He took her in his arms,

carried her to the reclining-chair and forced himself to pacify her. He besought her pardon for his ill-humor, begged her to forget this angry scene and accused himself of one of those fits of impatience of which it is impossible to divine the cause.

“I do not know what is the matter with me this morning,” he said, “some disagreeable news that I have received has irritated me, and I have sought a quarrel without a motive; think no more of what I have said except as of a momentary folly on my part.”

“Let us speak no more of it,” said the marquise who had revived, “and fetch me my cushion.” Valentin obeyed with reluctance; Madame de Parnes threw the cushion on the floor and put her feet on it. As you may be sure, this movement was not pleasing to Valentin; he frowned in spite of himself and realized after all that he had yielded through weakness to the whim of a woman.

I do not know whether he was right, nor can I conceive what childish obstinacy prompted the marquise, at all costs, to obtain this little triumph. It is not without example that a woman, a clever woman even, should not wish to submit in such a case; but it might also happen that this would be a bad calculation on her part, and that the man after having obeyed repents of his complaisance; it is thus that nonsense becomes serious when pride mingles with it, and people have

sometimes quarreled for even less than an embroidered cushion.

While Madame de Parnes, in recovering her gracious air did not conceal her satisfaction, Valentin could not take his eyes from the cushion, which to tell the truth was not intended to be used as a footstool. Contrary to her custom, the marquise had come on foot, and the widow's tapestry kicked into the middle of the floor carried the dusty imprint of the boot which had trodden upon it. Valentin took up the cushion, brushed it and placed it upon a chair.

"Are we going to quarrel again, then?" said the marquise smiling. "I thought you were going to let that pass and that peace was established."

"This cushion is white, why do you wish to soil it?"

"To use it, of course, and when it is soiled Mademoiselle Julie will make us another."

"Listen to me, madame," said Valentin. "You understand very well that I am not foolish enough to attach importance to a caprice or a trifle of this sort. If it is true that the displeasure I feel at what you do, arises from some motive of which you are ignorant, it will be wiser not to try to find it out. You fainted just now; I do not ask you if the attack was real, but you obtained what you desired; do not try to wrest more advantage from it."

"But you understand, perhaps," replied Madame de Parnes, "that neither am I foolish enough to attach

more importance to this trifle than you, and if I insist on an explanation you will understand that I would like to know just how much of a trifle it is."

"So be it, but I must ask you whether it is pride or love which makes you demand this."

"It is both. You do not know who I am: the lightness of my conduct with you has disposed you to an opinion of me which I allow, because you will not share it with any one; think what you like of me, and be as unfaithful as you seem to be, but take care of offending me."

"It is, perhaps, pride which speaks thus, madame, but agree at least that it is not love."

"I don't know anything about that; if I am not jealous, it is certain that it is through disdain. Since I allow only to Monsieur de Parnes the right to watch over me, I do not pretend to watch over anyone. But how do you dare to repeat twice a name which you ought to keep silent?"

"Why should I keep silent when you question me? This name need not be blushed for, by the person who bears it, nor by him who pronounces it."

"Well then, pronounce it."

Valentin hesitated a moment.

"No," he replied, "I will not pronounce it, through respect for her who bears it."

The marquise got up at these words, fastened her cloak around her and said in an icy tone:

"I think they must have come for me, conduct me to my carriage."

X

The Marquise de Parnes was more than proud, she was haughty. Accustomed from infancy to see all her caprices satisfied, neglected by her husband, spoiled by her aunt, flattered by those about her; the only counselor who directed her in the midst of so dangerous a liberty, was her native pride, and this triumphed even over her passions. She wept bitterly when she reached home; then she gave orders that no one was to be admitted, thought over what she should do, and resolved to trouble no more about it.

When Valentin went the next day to see Madame Delaunay, he thought he perceived that he was followed. He was indeed, and the marquise had soon learned the dwelling of the widow, her name, and the frequency of the visits paid by Valentin to her.

She did not wish to stop there, and adopted measures, which, however unlikely they may appear or that she should use them, nevertheless she did adopt and they succeeded.

At seven o'clock the next morning, she rang for her maid, and had her bring her one of her own print gowns, an apron and a cotton handkerchief, while she concealed her face under a large bonnet as much as possible. Thus disguised, a basket upon her arm, she went to the market of the Innocents. It was the hour when Madame Delaunay was accustomed to go there, and the marquise did not have to watch long. She knew that the widow resembled her, and she soon noticed before a fruit stall, buying cherries, a young woman about her height, with black eyes and a modest demeanor. She approached her.

"Is it not to Madame Delaunay," she asked, "that I have the honor to speak?"

"Yes, mademoiselle; what do you wish?"

The marquise did not reply, her fancy was satisfied and it little mattered to her that the other should be astonished. She threw a quick and curious gaze upon her rival, measured her from head to foot, then turned and disappeared.

Valentin went no more to see Madame de Parnes; then he received a printed invitation to a ball from her, and thought he ought to accept it through politeness. When he entered the house he was surprised to see only one window lighted; the marquise was alone and awaited him. "Pardon me," she said, "the little ruse which I have employed to bring you here; I thought you would, perhaps, not respond if I wrote to you

asking a quarter of an hour's interview, and I must say one word to you, begging that you will answer sincerely."

Valentin, who by nature, did not bear malice, and whose resentment quickly disappeared, wished to give a pleasant tone to the conversation, and so commenced to joke the marquise on her supposed ball, but she broke in on this by saying: "I have seen Madame Delaunay."

"Do not be frightened," she added, seeing Valentin change color, "I saw her, but without her knowing who I was, and so that she could not again recognize me. She is pretty, and it is true that she resembled me a little. Speak frankly to me: did you already love her when you sent me a letter which was written for her?"

Valentin hesitated.

"Speak, speak without fear," said the marquise. "It is the only way to prove that you have any esteem for me."

The tone of sadness with which she pronounced these words moved Valentin. He sat down beside her and related faithfully all that had passed in his heart. "I loved her then," he said to her finally, "and I love her still: it is the truth."

"Nothing more is possible then between us," replied the marquise rising. She went to a mirror and giving herself a coquettish look she continued:

"I have done for you the only action of my life where I have not thought of the consequences. I do not repent it, but I would like not to be alone in sometimes thinking of it."

She took from her finger a gold ring with an aqua marina setting.

"Here," she said, "wear this for love of me; this stone represents a tear."

When she presented her ring to the young man, he wished to kiss her hand.

"Take care," said she, "remember that I have seen your mistress, let us not forget it too soon."

"Ah!" replied he, "I love her still, but I feel that I will love you always."

"I believe it," replied the marquise, "and it is better perhaps for that reason that I leave to-morrow for Holland, where I am going to rejoin my husband."

"I will follow you," cried Valentin; "believe me, if you leave France I will go at the same time."

"Beware! that would ruin me, and you will try in vain to see me again."

"No matter; although I should follow you at a distance of ten leagues, I will at least prove to you the sincerity of my love, and you will believe it in spite of yourself."

"But I tell you that I believe it already," replied Madame de Parnes with a malicious smile; "good-bye then, do not be guilty of this folly."

She gave her hand to Valentin and half opened the door of her bedroom to withdraw.

“Do not be guilty of this folly,” she added lightly, “or, if by any chance you should do it, write me a line at Brussels, because from there one can change the route.”

After speaking these words, she closed the door, and Valentin, left alone, went out of the house in deep distress.

He could not sleep that night, and the next morning at daybreak he had not yet decided what course to follow. A very sad note received from Madame Delaunay had moved him without deciding him. At the idea of leaving the widow his heart was torn, but that other idea of following in post haste, the audacious and coquettish marquise made him tremble with eagerness; he looked at the horizon, he listened to the rolling of the carriages; the foolish enterprises of the past came again into his head; what shall I say? He dreamed of Italy, of pleasure, of a little scandal, a trip to Lauzun, disguised as a postilion; on the other hand, his excited memory recalled to him the fears so naïvely expressed one evening by Madame Delaunay. What frightful souvenir was he going to leave her! He repeated to himself these words of the widow: “*Must I some day hold you in horror?*”

He passed the entire day shut up by himself, and after having exhausted all the caprices, all the fantastic

projects of his imagination: "What do I want then?" he asked himself. "If I wished to choose between these two women, why this uncertainty? and, if I love them both equally, why am I, of my own free will, under the necessity of losing the one or the other? Am I crazy? Have I lost my reason? Am I false or sincere? Have I too little courage or too little love?"

He sat down at his table, and taking the drawing which he had formerly made, he attentively considered this unfaithful portrait which resembled his two mistresses. All that had happened in the last two months passed through his mind: the pavilion and the little chamber, the calico dress and the white shoulders, the grand dinners and the little lunches, the piano and the crochet needle, the two handkerchiefs and the embroidered cushion, he again saw all. Every hour of his life offered opposing suggestions. "No," he said finally, "it is not between two women that I have to choose, but between two routes which I wished to follow at the same time, and which could not lead to the same end: one is folly and pleasure, the other is love; which ought I to take? which leads to happiness?"

I told you in the beginning of this story that Valentin had a mother whom he tenderly loved. She entered his room while he was plunged in these thoughts. "My child," she said, "I see that you are sad this morning. What is the matter? Can I aid

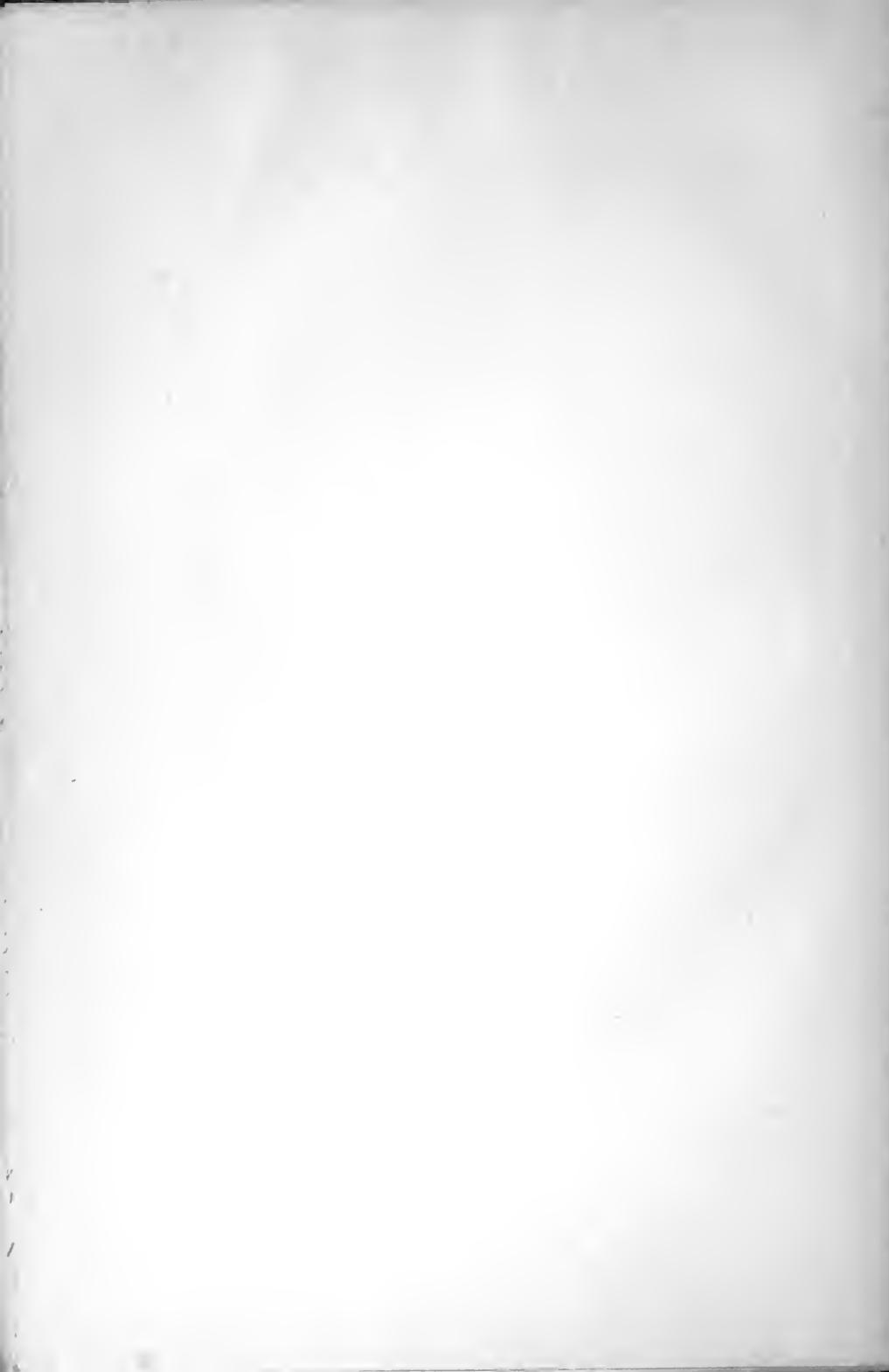
you? Are you in need of money? If I cannot help you, may I not at least know your trouble and try to console you?"

"I thank you," replied Valentin. "I was making arrangements for a journey, and I asked myself which ought to render us happy—love or pleasure. I had forgotten friendship. I will not leave my country, and the only woman to whom I can open my heart is she who can share it with you."



EMMELINE

1837







I

You remember, without doubt, madame, the marriage of Mademoiselle Duval. Although it was talked about for only a day in Paris, as everything is talked about there, it was an event in a certain circle. If my memory is correct, it was in 1825 that Mademoiselle Duval left the convent, at the age of eighteen, with an income of eighty thousand francs. Monsieur de Marsan, whom she married, possessed only his title and some hopes of one day attaining the peerage at the death of his uncle, hopes which the Revolution of July destroyed.

Moreover, he possessed no fortune, but a sufficiency of the irregularities of youth. It is said that he left the third floor of a furnished house to lead Mademoiselle Duval to the altar of Saint-Roch, and returned with her to one of the most beautiful houses of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. This strange marriage, apparently made without consideration, gave rise to a thousand interpretations, not one of which was correct, because not one was simple enough, and the world wished, at all hazards, to find some extraordinary reason for such an unusual occurrence. Some details, necessary to elucidate the situation, will at the same time give you an idea of our heroine.

After having been the noisiest, most studious, sickly, and headstrong child in the world, Emmeline became, at fifteen, a tall, slim, young girl with a pink and white complexion, and an independent character. She possessed a wonderfully even disposition, but was very indifferent, showing her will only in matters that touched her heart. She knew no restraint; and being always alone in her room, her only rule for study was the bent of her own pleasure. Her mother, who understood her, and knew how to love her, had exacted for her this liberty, which had some recompense for its lack of direction, for a natural taste for study and a lively intelligence are the best masters for well-formed minds. There was as much seriousness as gaiety in Emmeline's character, but her youth made the latter quality more

pronounced. Notwithstanding a strong disposition to reflection, she cut short her gravest meditations by some nonsense, and afterward she could only see the comical side of a subject. When alone, she was often heard breaking out into a peal of laughter, and it often happened at the convent that in the middle of the night she would awaken her neighbor by her noisy mirth.

Her very lively imagination seemed susceptible to a shade of enthusiasm; she spent days in drawing or writing; if an *aria* which pleased her occurred to her, she left everything to seat herself at the piano, and would play the favorite air a hundred times in every key. She was discreet, and never confidential, never showed the least effusiveness in friendships, and seemed to possess a kind of modesty which prevented her from giving expression to her sentiments. She loved to resolve for herself the little problems which offer themselves at every step in this world; and thus gave herself strange amusement, which the people who surrounded her never suspected. But her curiosity had always for its limit a certain self-respect, as this example, among others, will show.

She studied all day in a hall in which there was a large library enclosed within glass, and containing about three thousand volumes. The key was in the lock, but Emmeline had promised never to touch it. She kept her promise most faithfully, and there was much merit in her conduct, as she had a mania to know

everything. She had not been forbidden to devour the books visually, and she knew every title by heart; she glanced over each shelf successively, and in order to reach the highest ones, she placed a chair upon the table. With closed eyes, she could put her hand upon any volume which might have been asked for. She grew fond of the authors by the titles of their books, but often, in this way, made terrible mistakes. However, that is of no moment here.

There was a small table in this hall near a large window which looked out upon a rather dark courtyard. A remark made by one of her mother's friends caused Emmeline to notice the darkness of the room, for she never felt the influence of external objects on her spirits. She placed the persons who attach importance to that which composes the material well-being, in the category of maniacs.

Always bare-headed, her hair in disorder, defying both wind and sun, never happier than when she returned home soaked by the rain, she gave herself up in the country to every violent exercise, as if she had lived there all her life. Seven or eight leagues on horseback at a gallop were play for her; on foot, she defied all the world; she ran, she climbed trees, and if people walked on the sidewalks, instead of on the edge of the quay, and did not descend the stairs by the balustrade, she thought it was out of respect for conventionality. Above all, she loved, when at home, to run away alone,

to look at the country and to see no one. This childish love of solitude, and the pleasure which she felt in going out in terrible weather, was due, she said, to the fact that she was sure no one would then come to *seek her when she took her walks*. Always pursued by this strange thought, with its risks and perils, she would seat herself in a boat in the open stream and leave the park, which was traversed by the river, without thinking where she would land. How could she be allowed to run such dangers? I cannot take this upon myself to explain.

With all these follies, Emmeline loved to banter; she had an uncle, an excellent man, round as a ball, with a stupid laugh. She persuaded him that in looks and mind she was his image, giving him reasons for it that would have made a mummy laugh. After that, the worthy uncle conceived an unlimited tenderness for his niece. She played with him as with a child, jumped upon his neck when he arrived and climbed upon his shoulders. Until what age? Ah! I shall not tell you that. The greatest amusement of this little witch was to make this personage—otherwise very grave—read aloud; this was difficult for him, as he found no sense in the books, which may be explained by his method of punctuation. He paused in the middle of sentences, having for guide only the length of his breath. You may judge what nonsense he made, while the girl laughed immoderately. I must add that at the theatre

she did the same during tragedies, though she was sometimes moved at passages in the gayest comedies.

Pray excuse, madame, these childish details, which, after all, describe only a spoiled child. But it is necessary for you to understand that such a character, later in life, would act in its own way and not in accordance with the custom usually recognized.

When Emmeline was sixteen, the uncle in question took her with him to Switzerland. At the sight of the mountains, they feared she would lose her reason, her transports of joy appeared so intense. She cried aloud and darted out of the carriage; nothing satisfied her until she plunged her little face into the streams which rushed from the rocks. She wished to climb the peaks, or to descend to the torrents flowing from the precipices; she collected stones and tore off mosses. One day, after going into a châlet, she did not wish to leave it; they were obliged to carry her away almost by force, and when she was again seated in the carriage she exclaimed to the peasants, with tears in her eyes: "Ah! my friends, you let me depart."

Not a trace of coquetry appeared in her up to the time of her making her *début* in society. Is it a misfortune to find ourselves sent forth into the world without being provided with grand maxims? I do not know. On the other hand, do we not often fall into danger in our desire to avoid it? Take, for example, those poor people to whom love has been painted in

such terrible pictures, that when they enter a drawing-room, their heartstrings are strained by fear and at the lightest sigh they resound like harps. As to love, Emmeline was still absolutely ignorant. She had read some novels from which she had chosen a collection of what she termed silly sentimentalities which she willingly treated in a most amusing manner. She promised herself to live only as a looker-on. Without the least thought of her appearance, whether of face or figure, if she intended to go to a ball she placed a flower in her hair, without troubling herself as to its effect, and putting on a lace dress as she would a hunting costume, she departed happy, without having gazed at herself in the mirror for three-quarters of the time.

You will understand that with her fortune—for during her mother's lifetime her dowry was large—every day a new aspirant for her hand was proposed to her. She refused none of them without examination; but these successive examinations were to her only the opportunity for a gallery of caricatures. She measured the people from head to foot with much more assurance than is ordinary at her age, and in the evening, shut up with her intimate friends, she gave them a description of the morning's interview. Her natural talent for mimicry made this scene like a finished comedy. This one had such an embarrassed air, that one was so foolish; one talked through his nose, another greeted her awkwardly. Holding in her hand her uncle's hat, she

would enter the room, seat herself, talk of the rain and the fine weather, as is usual at first visits, and little by little would touch the matrimonial question, then, abruptly dropping her rôle, she would burst into laughter—a decisive reply which could be carried to her lovers.

A day arrived, however, when she stood before the mirror, arranging her flowers with more care than was her custom. There was to be a large dinner-party that day, and her maid had dressed her in a new costume which did not seem to her in good taste. An old opera air, which had been sung to her as a lullaby, recurred to her thoughts:

“ When one seeks to please one’s lovers,
One is near to being in love.”

The application she made of these words plunged her suddenly into a singular agitation. She remained thoughtful all the evening, and, for the first time, appeared sad.

Monsieur de Marsan had just arrived from Strasbourg, where his regiment was stationed; he was one of the handsomest of men, in whom was observable a proud air tinged with determination. I do not know if he was present at the dinner when the new dress was worn, but he was invited to a hunting-party by Madame Duval, who owned a very beautiful estate near Fontainebleau. Emmeline was one of this party. Just as they entered the forest, the sound of a horn caused her horse to run away. Accustomed to the caprices of the

animal, after having quieted him, she wished to punish him, but a cut of her whip given too sharply almost cost her her life. The sensitive animal rushed across the meadow toward a deep ravine, dragging the imprudent horsewoman with him. Monsieur de Marsan, who had alighted, ran to catch the horse; but the shock threw him down and his arm was broken.

From this day, Emmeline's character seemed entirely changed. An air of strange abstraction succeeded her gaiety. Madame Duval died shortly afterward and the country-seat was sold. It was said that in the house in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré the little Duval raised the Venetian blinds regularly when a handsome man on horseback passed on his way to the Champs-Élysées. However that may be, one year later, Emmeline made known to her family the determination she had reached and which nothing could alter. I need not tell you of all the worry and effort made to convince her. After six months of obstinate resistance, in spite of everything that could be done or said, it was necessary to yield to the young lady, and make her the Comtesse de Marsan.

II

The marriage accomplished, Emmeline resumed her former gaiety. It was a strange sight to see a woman

return to her childhood disposition after her marriage ; it seemed as if Emmeline's life had been held in check by her love, but as soon as it was satisfied, her life resumed its course, as a stream does, when stopped for an instant.

The daily childish pranks now no longer took place in the little obscure room, but in the grand de Marsan mansion as well as in the most dignified drawing-rooms, and you can imagine what effect they produced. The count, serious and sometimes grave, a little embarrassed, perhaps, by his new position, escorted his young wife with a sad manner while she laughed at everything, heedless of everything. At first people were astonished, then they complained, but at last they became accustomed to her ways, as to everything else. Monsieur de Marsan's reputation was not that of a marrying man, but as a husband it was good ; besides, had any one wished him to be more severe, he was not the person who could have restrained the good-natured gaiety of Emmeline. Uncle Duval had taken the precaution to announce that the marriage-contract, as far as money was concerned, placed his niece free from the control of a master ; society contented itself with this confidence, as was expected, and, as to that which had preceded or caused the marriage, it was regarded as a caprice of which the gossips made a romance.

However, society asked in whispers what extraordinary qualities could have fascinated a rich heiress

and determined her to commit such a rash act. Those whom fate has treated badly cannot easily imagine that any one would thus dispose of two millions, without some unnatural reason. They do not know that while most men desire riches above all else, a young girl sometimes has no idea what money is, especially when she is born rich, and has not seen wealth accumulated by her father. This was precisely the case with Emmeline; she married Monsieur de Marsan solely because he pleased her, and because she had neither father nor mother to oppose her; but as to the difference of fortune, she simply had given it no thought. Monsieur de Marsan had fascinated her by those exterior qualities which proclaim the man,—beauty and strength. He had done for her and before her, the only act which had set the young girl's heart beating; and as habitual gaiety is sometimes allied with a romantic disposition, her inexperienced heart became over-excited. The silly countess loved her husband to excess; she saw beauty in none but him, and when she took his arm, there was nothing else which could induce her to take the trouble of turning her head.

During the first four years of their married life, they were seen rarely in society. They hired a country-house on the Seine, near Melun. There are three or four villages in this neighborhood, which are called the May, and as the house is built apparently on the site of an old mill, it is called the *Moulin de May*. It is a charming

spot which commands an exquisite view. A broad terrace planted with lime-trees gives a view of the left bank of the river, and a hill covered with verdure slopes from the park to the borders of the water. Behind the mansion is a remarkably well-kept and elegant farm-yard which contains only one large building and in the middle of the farmyard is a pheasantry. An immense park surrounds the mansion, extending to the forest of Rochette. You remember this forest, madame, and recall what is called the *Alley of Sighs*? I have never known why it was so named, but have always felt that the name was appropriate. Walking there alone in its freshness, during the noonday heat, with the sun shining upon the thick hedge, this long gallery apparently stretches itself out as one advances, and a person is disturbed and bewitched to find himself alone, and, in spite of himself, falls into a reverie.

Emmeline did not like this walk ; she found it sentimental, and the jesting mood of her convent days returned when it was mentioned. The farmyard, on the contrary, was her delight ; she spent two or three hours there daily with the farmer's children. I am afraid that my heroine will seem to you foolish, if I tell you that when visitors came to see her, they sometimes found her upon a hayrick handling an enormous pitch-fork, her hair filled with hay ; but she would jump to the ground as lightly as a bird, and ere you had time to notice the spoiled child, the countess would be at your

side, doing the honors of her house with a grace that made you pardon her eccentricity.

If she were not at the farm, in order to find her, it was necessary to go to the end of the park where there was a little green hillock in the midst of rocks; it was a real baby desert like that of Rousseau, at Ermenonville, three pebbles and a moor. There, seated in the shade, she sang aloud as she read the *Funeral Orations* of Bossuet or other works equally grave. If you did not find her there, she was riding horseback in the vineyard, forcing some worn-out old farm horse to jump the ditches and the hurdles, amusing herself all alone with imperturbable nonchalance at the expense of the poor beast. If she was to be found neither in the vineyard, the desert, nor the farmyard, she was probably seated at the piano, reading a new score, her head thrust forward, her eyes sparkling, and her hands trembling; the music absorbed her mind, and she trembled with the hope that she might discover an air or a phrase to her taste. But if the piano was mute like all else, you would find the mistress of the house sitting, or rather crouching, upon a cushion in the corner of the chimney, the tongs in her hand, poking the fire. Her dreamy eyes sought figures, animals, and landscapes in the veins of the marble mantel, a thousand sources for reveries, and lost in that contemplation, she would burn the end of her foot with the tongs reddened in the fire.

“What nonsense!” I hear you exclaim; but it is not a romance that I am relating, as you will soon perceive for yourself.

In spite of her follies, she possessed a bright, intelligent mind, and after a time, ere she realized it herself, a circle of people of fine minds had formed itself around her. In 1829, Monsieur de Marsan was obliged to go to Germany to attend to some business matters concerning an inheritance, from which, however, he gained nothing. He did not wish to take his wife with him, and he put her under the protection of his aunt, the Marquise d'Ennery, who came to reside at the Moulin de May. Madame d'Ennery was a worldly woman; in the happy days of the Empire, she had been handsome, and she still walked with an assumed dignity, as though she wore a long train to her dress. An old spangled fan, which she always carried, served partly to screen her when she made a broad remark, which readily escaped her; but propriety remained always within her call, and as soon as her fan was lowered, her eyelids dropped also. Her manner of looking at things, and of speaking of them, at first astonished Emmeline to a degree that can scarcely be imagined; for, with her giddiness, Madame de Marsan had retained a rare innocence. The amusing stories of her aunt, the manner in which she regarded marriage, her insinuating smiles in speaking of others, her ohs! and ahs! in speaking of herself, all this made Emmeline sometimes serious and

astonished, sometimes wild with delight, as if she had heard a fairy-tale.

When the aged lady saw the *Alley of Sighs*, it goes without saying that she liked it much. Her niece went there from kindness, and it was there, in the midst of a perfect flood of idle chatter, that Emmeline learned to fathom the depth of things or, to put it in plain English, the manner of life of the Parisians.

They were walking together one morning, and as they talked they came to the forest of Rochette. Madame d'Ennery tried in vain to make the countess tell the story of her love-affairs; she questioned her in a hundred ways upon what took place in Paris during that mysterious year when Monsieur de Marsan wooed Mademoiselle Duval; she laughingly asked her if there had never been a secret meeting, a kiss stolen before they were engaged, and, in fact, how her passion had been aroused. Emmeline had been silent upon this subject all her life. I may be mistaken, but I believe the cause of this silence was that she could not talk of anything without making fun of it, and she did not wish to jest about this. Finally, the dowager, seeing her trouble was in vain, changed the subject, and asked if, after four years of marriage, this strange love still existed. "Just as it existed on the first day," replied Emmeline, "and just as it will exist until my last day." At these words Madame d'Ennery stopped walking, and with a majestic air kissed her niece on the forehead.

“Dear child,” she said, “you deserve to be happy, and certainly happiness is assured to the man whom you love.”

After this sentence, spoken with emphasis, she straightened herself, and added affectedly: “I believe that Monsieur de Sorgues looks at you with tender eyes !”

Monsieur de Sorgues was a fashionable young man, a great lover of horses and hunting, who came often to the Moulin de May, but more to see the count than his wife. It was, nevertheless, true enough that he made *tender eyes* at the countess. For what idle man, twelve leagues from Paris, would not look at a pretty woman if he met her? Emmeline had rarely thought of him, unless it were to see that he had everything he needed when at her house. He was indifferent to her, but this remark of her aunt made her hate him secretly, in spite of herself. As fate would have it, in returning from the woods, she saw a carriage in the courtyard which she recognized as that of Monsieur de Sorgues. He presented himself a moment afterward, expressing regret at having arrived so late from the country, where he had passed the summer, and at not finding Monsieur de Marsan. Whether from astonishment or repugnance, Emmeline could not control some emotion upon seeing him; she blushed, and he noticed it.

As Monsieur de Sorgues was a subscriber to the Opéra, and as he had supported two or three supernumeraries at a cost of one hundred crowns a month,

he considered himself a lady-killer and was, therefore, obliged to sustain the rôle. He wished to know to what degree he had dazzled Emmeline, so in going in to dinner he pressed her hand. The sensation was so novel a one to her that she shivered from head to foot, and it does not require even that to intoxicate a coxcomb with pride.

During one month it was decided by the aunt that Monsieur de Sorgues was the *adorer*. This became the subject of inexhaustible, old-fashioned rubbish, and words of equivocal meaning, which Emmeline bore with difficulty, but her good nature compelled her to submit. Unfortunately, or fortunately, it would be impossible to divine or to describe for what reasons the old marchioness found the adorer agreeable, or for what other reasons he pleased her less. But it is very easy to understand the effect which such ideas produced upon Emmeline, accompanied, as they were, be it understood, by examples drawn from recent history, and from all the precepts of well-born people who make love like dancing-masters. I believe that there is to be found in a book—as dangerous as the liaisons of which its title speaks—a remark, the depth of which is not thoroughly understood. “Nothing corrupts a young woman more quickly,” so it says, “than to find those corrupt whom she should respect.” The conversation of Madame d’Ennery awoke a sentiment of another nature in her niece’s mind. What am I, then,

she asked herself, if the world is thus? The thought of her absent husband tormented her; she wished she could find him beside her when she sat dreaming in the chimney-corner. At least she could consult him and ask him the truth; he should know it, as he was a man, and she felt that the truth uttered by that mouth was not to be feared.

She decided to write to Monsieur de Marsan and to complain of his aunt. The letter was written and sealed, and she was on the point of sending it, when, from one of the peculiarities of her disposition, she threw it into the fire with a laugh. "I am indeed a fool to make myself anxious," she exclaimed with her usual gaiety. "Is one handsome man to frighten me with his tender eyes?" At this moment, Monsieur de Sorgues entered the room, and apparently he had formed some decisive resolution on the way. He closed the door abruptly, and approaching Emmeline without saying a word, he seized and kissed her.

She was dumb with astonishment, and her only response was to ring the bell. Monsieur de Sorgues, in his rôle of lady-killer, at once appreciated the situation and left the room. That same evening he wrote a long letter to the countess, but he never returned to the Moulin de May.

III

Emmeline did not mention her adventure to any one. She saw in it only a lesson for herself and a subject for reflection. It did not change her manner, but when Madame d'Ennery embraced her at night before retiring, as was her custom, a slight shudder caused the countess to grow pale.

Instead of complaining to her aunt, as she at first resolved to do, she endeavored to become more intimate with her, and make her talk more. All thought of danger being over with the departure of the adorer, the countess was possessed of an insatiable curiosity.

The marquise had, in the full sense of the words, lived what is called a stormy girlhood. She had been already most entertaining in avowing a third of the truth, and after dinner, with her niece, she sometimes told the half of it. It is true that every morning she awoke resolved to say nothing more, and even to retract all that she had said; but her anecdotes unfortunately resembled the sheep of Panurge; as the day advanced, the confidences so multiplied, that when midnight struck, it sometimes happened that the hour-hand seemed to have counted off the number of little anecdotes of the worthy lady.

Seated in a deep arm-chair, Emmeline listened gravely, but I need not add that this sedateness was interrupted every few moments by a merry laugh and by droll questions. In spite of her scruples and indispensable reticence, Madame de Marsan read her aunt like a precious manuscript of which some pages are lacking, which must be replaced by the intelligence of the reader. The world appeared to her under a new aspect; she saw that, in order to make the puppets move, it is necessary to understand and to seize the threads. She learned from this reflection to have indulgence for others, which she has always preserved; it seems as if nothing shocks her, and no one criticises her friends less severely than Emmeline does. This fact is the necessary consequence of experience which has forced her to regard herself as a thing apart, and in amusing herself innocently with the weaknesses of others, she had refused to imitate them.

It was at this time, upon her return to Paris, that she figured as that Comtesse de Marsan who was so much talked about and who expanded so rapidly into a flower of fashion. She was no longer the little Duval, nor the noisy young married woman with her hair almost always in disorder. One trial sufficed, and her will had suddenly metamorphosed her. She was now a woman with reason and heart, who desired neither love-affairs nor conquests, and who, with a prudence which every one acknowledged, found means of being a favorite

everywhere. It seemed as if she had said to herself: "Since it is the way of the world, well, let us take it as it is."

She understood life, and for a year, you remember, no pleasant event happened without her. Society said and believed, I know, that no such extraordinary change could have taken place except through love, and they attributed to a new passion this new splendor of the countess. The world judges so quickly and is so often deceived! That which constituted Emmeline's charm was her resolution never to attack any one and to be unassailable herself. If there is any one to whom may be applied the charming saying of one of our poets: "I live by curiosity," it is to Madame de Marsan. This expression sums up her character thoroughly.

Monsieur de Marsan returned, but the failure of his journey had not put him in good humor. His projects had been overthrown. Thereupon came the Revolution of July, and he lost his epaulettes. Faithful to the party which he served, he abandoned society, except to pay an occasional visit in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. In the midst of these sad circumstances, Emmeline became ill; her delicate health was broken by protracted suffering and she expected to die. One year later she was hardly recognizable. Her uncle took her to Italy, and it was not until 1832 that she returned from Nice with the worthy man.

I have told you that she had become the centre of a circle ; on her return she found that it still existed, but, instead of being the lively and active woman of former days, she had now become sedentary. It seemed as if the agility of her body had left her and had concentrated itself in her mind. She went out as rarely as her husband, and it was seldom now that one passed her house in the evening without seeing her lights burning. A few friends assembled there ; as the best people seek each other, the home of Madame de Marsan soon became a most agreeable centre of reunion, to which admittance was accorded neither with too great difficulty nor with too much facility, and she had the good sense not to allow it to degenerate into a mere exchange for wit. Monsieur de Marsan, accustomed to a more exciting life, grew weary from want of congenial occupation. Conversation and idleness had never suited his tastes. At first he was seen less and less often in the salon of the countess, until, by degrees, he absented himself altogether. It was even said that, weary of his wife, he had taken a mistress, but as we have no proof of that, we will not discuss it.

Emmeline was twenty-five years old, and though not assigning any reason for the change she experienced, she, too, felt that weariness had taken possession of her. She recalled the *Alley of Sighs*, and solitude made her restless. She seemed urged by some desire, but when she sought that which she hankered after, she could find

nothing. It never occurred to her that she could fall in love twice in her life, inasmuch as she felt that she had given her whole heart, and that Monsieur de Marsan was the only person to possess it. When she heard *Malibran*, an involuntary fear seized her, and upon returning home she would sometimes pass the night singing alone, when the notes would tremble on her lips convulsively.

She believed that her passion for music would suffice to make her happy. She had a box at the *Italiens*, which she had covered with silk, like a boudoir. This box, decorated with great care, was for some time the constant object of her thought ; she chose the materials for it, and had placed therein a little Gothic glass which she particularly liked. Not knowing how to prolong this childlike pleasure, every day she added some new effect ; she herself worked in tapestry a little foot-stool, which was a masterpiece. At last, when everything was finished, when there was no possibility of inventing anything else, she found herself alone one evening in her favorite corner, listening to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. She looked neither at the audience nor at the stage ; she experienced an irresistible impatience. Rubini, Madame Heinefetter, and Mademoiselle Sontag were singing the trio of *The Masks*, which they were obliged to repeat. Lost in a reverie, Emmeline listened with her whole soul ; she noticed, on recovering from the spell, that she had thrown her arm upon the vacant

chair at her side, and that she was pressing her handkerchief tightly in the absence of a beloved hand. She did not ask herself why Monsieur de Marsan was not there, but she questioned why she was there alone, and this reflection troubled her.

Upon returning home she found her husband in the salon playing chess with a friend; and seating herself some distance away, almost in spite of herself she looked at the count. She watched the expressions of his noble face, which had seemed so beautiful when she was eighteen, when he threw himself before her horse. Monsieur de Marsan lost; and his knitted brows did not lend a gracious expression to his face. Suddenly he smiled; fortune favored him, and his eyes shone.

“You like this game?” Emmeline asked, smiling.

“Like music, to pass the time,” replied the count.

He continued, without looking at his wife.

“To pass the time!” Madame de Marsan repeated softly to herself in her room, as she was retiring. This phrase prevented her from sleeping: “He is handsome, he is brave and he loves me,” she said to herself. Yet her heart beat violently. She listened to the noise of the clock, and the monotonous vibration of the pendulum was insupportable to her; she rose to stop it. “What am I doing!” she questioned; “can I stop the hour and time by forcing this little clock to be silent?”

With her eyes fixed upon the clock, she gave herself up to thoughts which had never assailed her before.

She thought of the past, of the future, of the rapidity of life ; she asked herself why we are upon the earth, what we do here, and what awaits us hereafter. In examining her heart, she recalled only one day when she had really lived, that on which she felt she loved. The rest seemed to her a confused dream, a succession of days as monotonous as the movement of the pendulum. She leaned her forehead on her hand, and felt an unconquerable need to live, shall I say to suffer? Perhaps. In this instance she would have preferred suffering to her melancholy. She decided that she wished a change in her life at any cost. She formed a hundred plans for travelling, but no country pleased her. What was she going to seek? The uselessness of her desires, the uncertainty which overwhelmed her, frightened her. She thought she must, for the moment, have been overcome by madness. Rushing to the piano she tried to play the *Trio of the Masks*, but, at the first chords, she burst into tears and remained pensive and discouraged.

IV

Among the frequent visitors to the house of Madame de Marsan was a young man named Gilbert. I feel, madame, that in speaking of him to you, I touch a delicate point, and I do not know how I can treat it.

For six months he had called on the countess once or twice a week, and the feeling which he experienced when near her should not, perhaps, be termed love. But whatever we may say of love, it is hope. As her friends knew, if Emmeline excited desires, her conduct and character were not such as to encourage them. Never in the presence of Madame de Marsan had Gilbert asked himself a question of this kind. She pleased him by her conversation, by her manner of observation, her tastes, her mind, and by a little malice which is the plaything of wit.* Away from her, a look, a smile, some secret beauty barely glanced at—what shall I say? A thousand memories overpowered him and pursued him incessantly, like snatches of a melody, of which, after a musical evening, we cannot rid ourselves; but as soon as he saw her, he recovered his calmness, and the facility for seeing her often prevented him, perhaps, from desiring more, for, sometimes, it is only on losing those whom we love, that we learn how much we love them.

Emmeline was to be found at home in the evening, almost always surrounded. Gilbert hardly ever arrived before ten o'clock, just at the moment when the greatest number of people were present, and no one person remained until the last; everybody left together at midnight, sometimes later, if by chance an amusing story were being told. Thus it happened, that in spite of his visiting the countess so often for six months, Gilbert had

not had a single tête-à-tête with her. Nevertheless, he knew her well, probably better than more intimate friends, whether from natural penetration or from another cause, which you must also understand. He delighted in music as much as she did, and, as the same ruling taste explains many things, it was through this that he understood her. There was some phrase in a song, some passage in an Italian *aria*, which was the key to a treasure for him. The *aria* finished, he looked at Emmeline, and it was rarely that their eyes did not meet. If there were a discussion concerning a new book, or a play at the theatre the previous evening, when one of them gave his or her opinion about it, the other nodded approval. It so chanced that they always laughed at the same time, if an anecdote was told; and a touching recital of some noble act caused them to turn their heads aside at the same time, for fear of betraying too much emotion. To express it all in one word, they were congenial. But you will say that is love; patience, madame, not yet.

Gilbert went often to the *Italiens*, and often passed an act in the countess's box. By chance, one evening *Don Giovanni* was being repeated. Monsieur de Marsan was present. When the trio was being sung, Emmeline could not refrain from glancing at her side and remembering her handkerchief. This time it was Gilbert's turn to dream at the sound of the violoncello and the melancholy harmonies; his whole soul hung

upon the lips of Mademoiselle Sontag, and whoever has felt as he did, would have believed himself madly in love with the charming singer. His eyes sparkled, and one could read in his slightly pale face, shaded by his long black hair, the pleasure he felt. His lips were a little apart, and his trembling hand beat time lightly upon the velvet balustrade. Emmeline smiled; and I am forced to avow at this moment, seated at the back of the box, the count slept profoundly.

So many obstacles oppose themselves here below to chances of this sort, that they are only occasional events, but even so, they are all the more striking and are the longer remembered. Gilbert did not in the least suspect Emmeline's secret thoughts and the comparison which she made. However, there were certain days when he questioned if the countess were at heart truly happy; in asking this he did not believe it, but when he reflected upon it he was no wiser. Surrounded by almost the same persons and living in the same sphere, both had necessarily a thousand occasions to write to one another for slight reasons; these unimportant notes, always observing conventional laws, afforded the means of expressing a word, a thought, which would cause a reverie. Gilbert often remained a whole morning with a letter from Madame de Marsan open upon the table; and, in spite of himself, from time to time he would cast his eyes upon it. His excited imagination made him seek some particular

meaning in the most insignificant fact. Sometimes Emmeline signed in Italian “*VostriSSIMA*,” and in vain he tried to regard it only as a friendly formula, but he kept repeating to himself that this word meant: Entirely yours.

Although not a man of amorous intrigues like Monsieur de Sorgues, Gilbert had yet had mistresses. He was far from professing for women that appearance of precocious disdain which young men regard as good form, but he considered them in his own way. I cannot explain it to you otherwise than by telling you that the Comtesse de Marsan seemed an exception to him. Assuredly, many women are prudent; I am mistaken, they are all so; but there is a way of being so. Emmeline at her age, rich, pretty, a little sad, enthusiastic on some points, sublimely indifferent as to others, surrounded by the best society, full of talent and loving pleasure—all these seemed to the young man strange elements of prudence. “She is beautiful, however,” he repeated as he promenaded the boulevard Italien during the warm evenings in August. “She likes her husband, without doubt, but it is only friendship; love has passed; can she live without love?” While he thought this, he remembered that he had lived without a mistress for six months.

One day, as he was paying calls, he passed the house of the De Marsans, and rang, contrary to his custom, for it was only three o’clock. He hoped to find the

countess alone, and he was surprised that the idea of this happy chance had not occurred to him before. They told him she had gone out. He walked toward his apartment in a bad humor, muttering to himself as was his habit. It is not my place to tell you of what he was thinking. His abstraction led him, little by little, away from his route, and at the corner of the crossing of the Carrefour Bussy, I believe, he pushed somewhat rudely against a passer-by, and certainly in rather a droll manner, for he found himself face to face with an unknown person to whom he was saying: "If I told you, however, that I love you?"

He hastened away, ashamed of his foolishness, at which he could not help laughing, when he noticed that his ridiculous apostrophe had made a well-turned verse. He had made poetry when at college, and the fancy seized him to find the rhyme for it, in which he succeeded, as you will see.

The next day was Saturday, the reception-day of the countess. Monsieur de Marsan had begun to relax his solitary resolutions somewhat, and there was a great gathering there that evening. The lighted candles, all the doors thrown open, an enormous circle around the fire-place, the women on one side, the men on the other; this was not the place to deliver love-letters. Gilbert approached the mistress of the house, not without difficulty, and after having talked with her and her neighbors for a quarter of an hour, he drew from his

pocket a folded paper, which he amused himself by creasing. As this paper looked like a letter, all creased as it was, he expected that some one would make a remark about it; in fact, some one did, but not Emmeline. He put it in his pocket, only to take it out again. At last the countess noticed it and asked him what it was. "It is," he said, "some verses of mine which I have written for a beautiful woman, and I will show them to you if you will promise me, in case you divine who it is, that you will not injure me in her mind." Emmeline took the paper and read the following stanzas:

TO NINON

Should I tell you, indeed, brunette with eyes of blue,
That I love you, who then could tell what you would say?
That love brings bitter pain, alas! you know is true :
'Tis a pitiless grief that e'en yourself doth rue ;—
Yet, nevertheless, you'd make me its penalties pay.

If I told you that silent for six months I went,
Mute anguish concealing, mad vows and despair,
Ninon, you're shrewd, and with air all indifferent
Delight, like a fairy, to divine the intent ;—
"I know it," might be all you would deign to declare.

If I told you that a madness gentle, slow,
Has made of me your shadow keeping closely by ?
A shade of doubt, an air of sadness, as you know,
But makes you, Ninon, with a greater beauty glow ;—
"I don't believe it," then perchance you would reply.

If I told you that in my soul deep hidden lies
The simplest thought you breathe at eventide ?
A wounded glance, you know, madame, would then surprise
Two gleams of fire, instead of two celestial eyes ;—
Why then perhaps straightway you'd drive me from your side.

Should I tell you that tireless I watch each night,
That on my knees I daily pray and weep the while ?
When you smile, Ninon, you know a bee might alight
On your rosy lip, as on some honey blossom bright ;—
Did I thus speak, you might but greet it with a smile.

But naught you know ; I come, but ne'er my love confess,
To sit beneath your lamp and your sweet converse hear ;
I hear your voice, and breathe the air that you caress ;—
And you may think, may smile, and e'en while smiling guess,
Yet naught your eyes shall see to beam on me less clear.

The mystic flowers I pluck in secret none may know :
Near you reclined at eve, I hear soft music's charms,
Born at your touch creative, from the key-board flow,
And in the whirling, joyous dance I feel you glow,
And like a graceful reed, bend rhythmic in my arms.

At night, when by the world's decree we're kept apart,
I seek my home, and draw the sheltering bolts secure,
A thousand thoughts assail my over-jealous heart,
Then with my God alone, with miser's joy I start
At my soul's wealth : 'tis filled with thee, a treasure pure.

I love, yet no response reveals my anxious care ;
I love, yet never aught declares my love unknown ;
Dear is my secret, dear my grief that none may share ;
Yet have I sworn to love, e'en though 'tis hopeless e'er.
'Tis not a joyless love ; to see you will atone.

Ah ! no, not mine, alas ! to taste the bliss supreme
Of dying in your arms, of living at your feet :
All things convince of this, aye ! e'en my grief extreme—
Blue-eyed brunette, yet did I tell you my love-dream,
Who knows what you would say, how my confession greet ?

When Emmeline had finished reading these verses, she returned the paper to Gilbert without a word. A short time afterward, she asked for it again, read it a second time, then held it in her hand with an air of indifference, as he had done, and some one coming toward her, she rose and forgot to return the paper.

V

Who are we, I ask you, that we should act thus lightly? Gilbert was happy when he left his home for this reception ; he returned trembling like a leaf. Whatever may have been exaggerated and a *little more than true* in these verses, became true as soon as the countess touched them. She had not replied, nevertheless, and before so many witnesses it was impossible to ask her. Was she offended? How was he to interpret her silence? Would she speak of it when they met, and what would she say? Her image presented itself to him, sometimes cold and severe, sometimes

sweet and smiling. Gilbert could not bear the uncertainty, and after a sleepless night, he called upon the countess. He learned that she had gone away by post-chaise, and that she was at the Moulin de May.

He remembered that a few days before he had asked her, by chance, if she expected to go to the country, and she had answered no; this remembrance struck him suddenly. "It is on my account that she is gone," he said; "she fears me, she loves me!" At this last word he stopped. His heart was oppressed, he could hardly breathe, and an indescribable terror overcame him, he trembled at the idea of having touched such a noble heart so quickly.

The closed shutters, the deserted courtyard, several servants who were loading a baggage-van, this precipitate departure seemed a sort of flight; it all troubled and astonished him. He walked home very slowly. In a quarter of an hour he became a changed man. He foresaw nothing, he made no calculations; he no longer knew what he had done the previous evening nor the circumstances that had led him to do it. No sentiment of pride found any place in his thoughts; during that entire day he did not even think of profiting by his new position, or of attempting to see Emmeline. She seemed to him neither tender nor severe. He saw her seated on her terrace rereading the stanzas which she had kept, and in repeating to himself: "She loves me!" he questioned if he were worthy of it.

Gilbert was only twenty-five years old when his conscience spoke, his youth in its turn spoke also. He took the carriage to Fontainebleau the next day, and arrived in the evening at the Moulin de May. When he was announced, Emmeline was alone. She received him with a noticeable uneasiness, and as she saw him close the door, the remembrance of Monsieur de Sorgues blanched her cheeks. But at Gilbert's first word she saw that he was no more reassured than she herself was. Instead of touching her hand, as he did ordinarily, he seated himself with a more timid and reserved manner than usual. They were alone for about an hour, and there was no mention of the verses nor of the love which they expressed. When Monsieur de Marsan returned from a walk, a shade passed over Gilbert's face, and he told himself that he had not profited from his first tête-à-tête. But with Emmeline it was quite otherwise. Gilbert's respect for her had touched her. She fell into the most dangerous sort of reverie. She realized that she was loved, and the moment she felt herself in safety she loved.

When she came down the following day for luncheon, the beautiful color of her youth had returned to her cheeks; her face, as well as her heart, had grown ten years younger. She wished to ride horseback in spite of the terrible weather; she mounted a superb mare which did not obey readily, and it seemed as if she wished to endanger her life. With a laugh, she held

the whip over the restless animal's head, and she could not resist the curious pleasure of striking it, when it had not deserved it. She felt her mare jump angrily, and while she shook off the foam with which she was covered, Emmeline looked at Gilbert. By a quick movement the young man approached to seize the bridle of the horse ! "Oh, no ! " she said, with a laugh, "I shall not fall this morning."

Some mention of the verses was necessary, but in truth they did not talk much of them, save with their eyes: such language is worth more than speech. Gilbert passed three days at the Moulin de May ; he was on the point of falling on his knees at every instant. When he looked at Emmeline's waist, he trembled, fearing he could not resist the temptation to encircle it with his arm ; but as soon as she took a step, he moved to allow her to pass, as if he were afraid to touch her gown. The third day, at evening, he had announced his departure for the next morning. While drinking tea, they were discussing waltzing and Lord Byron's ode, *The Waltz*. Emmeline remarked that, in order to speak with so much animosity, its delights must have deeply excited the envy of the poet, who could not partake of it. She got the book to support her opinion, and in order that Gilbert might read it with her, she placed herself so near him that her hair touched his cheek. This slight contact gave him a gentle quiver of pleasure which he could not have

resisted if Monsieur de Marsan had not been present. Emmeline noticed it and blushed; they closed the book, and this was the sole incident of his journey.

Really, madame, is he not truly a curious lover? There is a proverb which pretends that what is deferred is not lost. In general I do not like proverbs, because they are saddles to fit any horse; there is not one of them which has not its antithesis, and whatever line of conduct one follows, there is a proverb in its support. But I confess that the one just cited appears to me false in its application a hundred times, for once that it is correct, all the more so for those people who are as patient as resigned, as resigned as indifferent. It is to be wondered at that this language should be used in Paradise and the saints should say among themselves that what is deferred is not lost. It suits those who have eternity before them to throw time out of the window; but we poor mortals have no such limitless chance. I give you my hero for what he is worth, and I believe that had he acted in any other manner he would have shared the fate of Monsieur de Sorgues.

Madame de Marsan returned to Paris at the end of the week. Gilbert arrived one evening at the house very early. The heat was overpowering. He found her alone at the back of her boudoir, lying upon a couch. She was dressed in muslin, with her neck and arms bare. Two jardinières filled with flowers perfumed the room, while the door opening upon the garden

admitted the warm, balmy air. Everything was conducive to indolence. Yet a strange, unaccustomed irritation entered into their conversation. I have told you that it so happened that they continually expressed their thoughts and sensations in the same terms and at the same time ; this evening they were not in harmony about anything, consequently both were unfair. Emmeline mentioned certain women of her acquaintance. Gilbert spoke of them with enthusiasm, and she spoke proportionately ill of them. Twilight came on, and they were silent. A servant entered with a lamp, and Madame de Marsan said she did not require it and ordered her to place it in the salon. Scarcely had she given this order than she seemed to repent it, and rising with some embarrassment she went toward her piano. "Come," she said to Gilbert, "and see the little foot-stool from my opera-box, which I have just had mounted differently ; I can use it as a seat here. It has just been brought home and I will play to you a little, that you may be the first to see it used."

She played a soft prelude of indistinct melodies, then Gilbert soon recognized his favorite air, *Le Désir* by Beethoven. Forgetting herself, little by little, Emmeline threw into her execution the most passionate expression, hurrying the movement until one's heart beat, then suddenly stopping as if breath had failed her, forcing the tones, then letting them die softly away. No spoken thoughts could equal the tenderness of such a language;

Gilbert was standing, and from time to time her beautiful eyes were raised to consult his. He was leaning upon the corner of the piano, and both were battling with their emotions, when an almost ludicrous accident aroused them from their reverie.

The stool broke suddenly and Emmeline fell at Gilbert's feet. He darted forward to give her his hand, and she took it as she rose laughing. He was as pale as death, fearing that she was injured.

"It is all right," she said, "please give me a chair. Any one would think I had fallen from the fifth story." She began to play a quadrille, and as she played she joked him for being so frightened.

"Was it not natural," he said, "that I should be frightened at seeing you fall?"

"Bah!" she replied, "it was nervousness, but you know I am grateful. I agree that my fall was ridiculous, but I think," she added a little harshly, "that your fear is more so."

Gilbert walked up and down the room several times, and the quadrille became less and less gay from moment to moment. Emmeline felt that in joking she had wounded him. He was too much moved to speak. He returned, and leaned before her in the same place; his swollen eyelids could not restrain his tears. Emmeline arose quickly, and seated herself in a dark corner of the room. He approached her and complained of her harshness. Now it was the countess's turn not to

be able to speak. She was silent, and in a state of agitation impossible to describe. He took his hat to leave, but not being able to decide upon that, he seated himself near her; she turned away from him, and put out her hand as a sign for him to leave; he seized it and pressed it to his heart. At that instant some one rang for entrance, and Emmeline rushed into a side-room.

The next day the poor fellow realized that he was going to Madame de Marsan's only when he arrived there. Experience made him fear that he would find her severe and indignant at what had happened. He was mistaken: she was calm and indulgent, and the first words the countess uttered told him that she expected him; but she insisted firmly that they must cease to see each other. "I do not," she said, "repent of the fault which I have committed, and I do not try to condemn myself for anything. But although I may make you suffer, and suffer myself, Monsieur de Marsan stands between us. I cannot deceive him, and you must forget me."

Gilbert was astonished at this frankness, the persuasive accents of which left no doubts. He disdained the vulgar phrases and vain menaces of death which are always used in such cases; he tried to be as courageous as the countess, and, at least, to prove to her in what esteem he held her; he told her he would obey her wishes, and would leave Paris for a time. She asked him where he

expected to go, and promised to write to him. She wished him to understand her thoroughly, and related to him, in a few words, the history of her life, showed him her position, the state of her heart, and did not, by her words, express her happiness as greater than it was in truth. She returned his verses, and thanked him for having created for her a moment of real pleasure. "I abandoned myself to it," she told him, "without wishing to reflect. I was sure the impossible would stop me, but I had no power to resist that which was possible. I hope that you will not see in my behavior a coquetry of which I have been innocent. I ought to have considered you more, but I did not think you enough in love to suppose that you would not soon be cured of it."

"I will be equally frank with you," replied Gilbert, "and tell you that I know nothing about it, but I do not think it will be cured. Your beauty has affected me less than your mind and your character, and if the image of a beautiful face can be effaced by absence or by years, the loss of a being such as you are is forever irreparable. Without doubt, I shall be cured in appearance, and it is quite certain that after a time I shall again resume my habitual life, but my reason will always tell me that you would have been the supreme joy of my life. These verses which you have returned to me were written by chance, the inspiration of a moment's madness; but the sentiment they express has been rooted in my heart ever since I have known you,

and I have had the strength to hide it, only because it is true and lasting. Neither of us will be happy, and we shall make a sacrifice for the world for which there will be no compensation."

"It is not for the world that we shall make it, but for ourselves," Emmeline said, "or, rather, you will make it for me. Deception is insupportable to me, and yesterday, after you had left, I barely escaped telling everything to Monsieur de Marsan. Courage!" she added gaily, "courage! my friend, let us try to live." Gilbert kissed her hand respectfully and they separated.

VI

This determination had scarcely been made when they felt that it would be impossible to keep it. Long explanations were unnecessary to convince both of this. Gilbert did not visit Madame de Marsan for two months, and during these months they both lost their appetites and their sleep. At the end of this time, Gilbert found himself one evening so desolate and weary of life, that, without realizing what he was doing, he took his hat and called on the countess at his usual hour as if nothing had happened. It never occurred to her to utter a word of reproach to him because he had not

Emmeline Chapter VI

*She stands before her cheval-glass, she turns to listen;
no lookers-on, no noise; she partially opens the veil which
covers her, and like Venus before the shepherd of the
fable, she appears timidly.*







kept his word. As soon as she looked at him, she understood what he had suffered, and he found her so pale and changed that he regretted not having returned sooner.

That which filled Emmeline's heart was neither a caprice nor a passion ; it was the voice of her nature, pleading her cravings for a new love. She had never reflected much upon Gilbert's character ; he pleased her and he was there ; he had told her that he loved her, and he loved her in a very different way from her husband. Emmeline's mind, her intelligence, her enthusiastic imagination, all her noble qualities suffered without her knowledge. Tears, which she fancied she shed without reason, would flow in spite of her, and compel her to seek some motive for them. Her books, her music, her flowers, even her habits and her solitary life, everything indicated to her the reason—she must love and resist, or resign herself and die.

The Comtesse de Marsan regarded with a courageous pride the abyss into which she had fallen. When Gilbert again pressed her to his heart, she looked toward Heaven, as though imploring its record of her fault and that which it was about to cost her. Gilbert understood this melancholy look, and he measured the greatness of his task by the nobility of her heart. He felt that in his hands lay the power to give her true existence or to degrade her forever. This thought gave him less pride than joy, and he vowed to consecrate himself to her and thanked God for the love which he felt.

The necessity for the deception grieved the young woman, but she did not mention it to her lover, keeping this pain a secret suffering. Yet the thought of resisting for a longer or shorter time, until the moment when she could resist forever, never came into her mind. She weighed, so to speak, the chances of suffering and the chances of happiness, and boldly offered her life as the stake. Just at the moment when Gilbert returned she was obliged to pass three days in the country. He begged her to accord him a rendezvous before going.

"I will do so if you wish," she replied to him, "but I beg you to allow me to wait."

Toward midnight of the fourth day a young man entered the *Café Anglais*.

"What does monsieur wish?" asked the waiter.

"The best of everything that you have," replied the young man, with such a joyous air that everybody turned to look at him.

At the same time, in the house of Monsieur de Marsan, a half-open Venetian blind revealed a light behind a curtain. Alone, undressed for the night, Madame de Marsan was seated upon a little chair in her chamber, with locked doors. "To-morrow I will be his. Will he be mine?"

Emmeline never thought of comparing her conduct with that of other women. At this moment there was neither sorrow nor remorse for her; everything became silenced before the thought of the morrow. Dare I

tell you of what she was thinking? Dare I write what at this terrible hour tormented a beautiful and noble woman, the most sensible and honest I ever knew, upon the eve of committing the only fault for which she has ever had to reproach herself?

She thought of her beauty. Love, devotion, sincerity of heart, constancy, sympathy in tastes, fear, dangers, repentance, all were driven away, everything else was annihilated by the most terrible anxiety about her charms, about her personal beauty. The light which we notice is that of a candle which she holds in her hand. She stands before her cheval-glass, she turns to listen; no looker-on, no noise; she partially opens the veil which covers her, and like Venus before the shepherd of the fable, she appears timidly.

To describe to you the following day, madame, I cannot do better than to copy a letter from Emmeline to her sister, in which she herself gives an account of what she felt:

“I was his. An extreme prostration succeeded all my anxieties. I was crushed, and this weariness pleased me. I passed the evening in reverie; I saw vague forms; I heard far-away voices; I distinguished: ‘My angel, my life!’ and I grew weaker and weaker. Not once did my thoughts go back to my uncertainties of the previous day, during that semi-lethargy which my memory has enshrined as the state I would choose for

Paradise. I retired to bed, and slept like a newly-born infant. Upon awakening in the morning, a confused remembrance of the events of the evening before sent the blood to my heart with a rush. Palpitation made me sit up, and then I heard myself exclaim in a loud voice: '*It is all over.*' I leaned my head upon my knees and looked into the depths of my soul. For the first time I feared that he would misjudge me, and the readiness with which I had yielded would lead him to this opinion. In spite of his judgment and his intelligence, I feared it was an evil, worldly experience. Had it been to him only a caprice, a difficulty to overcome? Too much astonished, too greatly moved, confused by all the sentiments which conquered me, I had not sufficiently studied his feelings. I was frightened, my breath grew short. Well, I said to myself bravely, the day when he will know me he will have arrears to pay. Suddenly all this gloom became illuminated by tender memories. I felt a smile play around my mouth; I saw again his face, as I had seen it the night before, with a beauty of expression that I had seen nowhere, even in the masterpieces of the great painters. I read in it love, respect, worship, and the doubt, the fear of not possessing me, however much he ardently longed for it. That, believe me, is the supreme moment for a woman, and thus soothed I dressed myself. There is great pleasure in making her toilette when a woman expects her lover."

VII

Emmeline had waited five years to perceive that her first choice would not make her happy. She had suffered for one year from this discovery; for six months she had struggled against a growing passion, and for two months against an avowed love. At last she had succumbed, and her happiness lasted two weeks.

Two weeks,—that is indeed a short time, is it not? I commenced this story without reflection, and I see that at the moment when my thoughts made me take up the pen, I have nothing to say about this, unless that it was very short. How shall I attempt to describe it to you? Shall I tell you what is inexpressible, and which the greatest geniuses on earth have allowed their readers to divine in their works, in default of a word which could describe it? Certainly you do not expect that, and I shall not commit that sacrilege. That which comes from the heart may be described, but not that which is the heart itself. Besides, if one is happy for two weeks, is there time to be conscious of it? Emmeline and Gilbert were still astonished at their happiness; they dared not believe it and marvelled at the rapturous tenderness with which their hearts were filled. “Is it possible,” they asked each other, “that our glances ever met with indifference and that our hands ever

touched each other with coldness?" "What! have I looked at you," said Emmeline, "without my eyes being dim with tears? Have I listened to you without kissing your lips? You have talked to me as to the rest of the world, and have I replied without telling you that I loved you?" "No," replied Gilbert, "your looks, your voice betrayed you; good God! how they have penetrated me! It was I who held back from fear, I am the cause of our loving each other so late." Then they would press each other's hands, as if to say: "We must be calm, or it may cause our deaths."

Hardly had they commenced to be habituated to their private interviews and to enjoy the terrors of mystery; hardly had Gilbert learned to know that changed countenance, which a woman suddenly discloses when she falls into the arms of her lover; hardly had Emmeline's first smiles appeared through her tears; hardly had they vowed to love each other eternally—poor children!—than, confident in their fate, they gave themselves up to their love without fear, and tasted slowly the pleasure of the reality of not being deceived in their mutual hopes, still saying to themselves: "How happy we are!"—when their happiness vanished.

The Comte de Marsan was a resolute man, and his keen perception of matters never deceived him. He had noticed his wife was sad; he had thought that she loved

him less, and he was not troubled about it. But he saw her preoccupied and anxious, and he resolved not to allow it. As soon as he took the trouble to seek its cause, he found it easily. Emmeline was disturbed at his first question, and at his second, was upon the point of avowing all. He did not wish any confidences of this nature, and without saying a word to any one, he went back to the furnished house where he had resided before his marriage, and hired an apartment.

As his wife was retiring, he entered her room in his dressing-gown, and seating himself before her, he spoke to her somewhat as follows:

“You know me well enough, my dear, to know that I am not jealous. I have had much love for you, and I have, and always shall have, much esteem and friendship. Certainly at our age, and after so many years passed together, a reciprocal tolerance for each other is necessary that we may continue to live in peace. For my part, I exercise the liberty which belongs to a man, and I find it all right that you should do the same. Had I brought into this house as much money as you did, I should not speak thus to you, I hope you will understand. But I am poor, and by our marriage contract I voluntarily remained poor. That which in another would be only indulgence or prudence, would be baseness in me. Whatever may be the precautions taken, an intrigue is never secret, and sooner or later

it is talked about. If that day come, you would feel that I stood neither in the category of complaisant husbands, nor even in that of ridiculous husbands, but that I should be considered as only a miserable creature who would endure everything for the sake of money. It is not my temperament to make an open rupture, which would bring dishonor on two families at the same time, whatever might be the result. I bear no hatred against you or any one else; it is for this reason that I have come to tell you the resolution which I have taken, in order to prevent the consequences of the astonishment it would cause. After next week I shall reside in the hotel where I resided when I made the acquaintance of your mother. I am sorry to remain in Paris, but I have not the means to travel; it is necessary that I should live somewhere, and that house suits me. Consider what you wish to do, and if possible, I will act in accordance."

Madame de Marsan had listened to her husband with an astonishment which increased every instant. She sat like a statue; she saw that he had made up his mind, and yet she could not believe it. She threw herself upon his neck almost involuntarily, and exclaimed that nothing in the world would make her consent to this separation. He answered all she said by absolute silence. Emmeline burst into tears, and threw herself before him on her knees, wishing to confess, but he stopped her and refused to listen. He tried to comfort

her, repeating that he felt no resentment against her; then, in spite of her prayers, he left her.

The following day they did not meet; when Emmeline asked if the count was at home, she was told that he had gone out very early and would not return during the day. She wished to wait for him, and at six o'clock in the evening she shut herself up in Monsieur de Marsan's rooms, but her courage failed her and she returned to her own room.

The count came down to breakfast the following day, dressed in his riding-suit. The servants began to pack his effects and the corridor was full of things in disorder. Emmeline went up to her husband as he entered, when he kissed her forehead, and they seated themselves in silence. The meal was served in the countess's bed-chamber. Her Psyche stood in front of her, and she fancied she saw her ghost in it. Her disordered hair, her dejected expression seemed to reproach her with her fault. She inquired of the count, in an uncertain voice, if he still intended to leave the house. He replied that he had made his preparations, and had fixed the following Sunday for his departure.

“Is there no way to delay this departure?” she asked, in a beseeching tone.

“What has happened cannot be changed,” replied the count; “have you considered what you intend doing?”

“What do you wish me to do?” she asked.

Monsieur de Marsan did not reply.

“What do you wish?” she repeated; “what means can I use to move you? What expiation, what sacrifice can I offer you, which you will consent to accept?”

“You are the one to know,” replied the count, as he rose and left the room without uttering another word. But that same evening he returned to his wife’s apartments and his expression was less severe.

These two days had so exhausted Emmeline that she was fearfully pale. Monsieur de Marsan, when he noticed it, could not refrain from making a compassionate movement.

“Well, my dear,” he said, “what are you going to do?”

“I have thought it over,” she said, “and I see that nothing can possibly be done.”

“You love him, then, so much?” he asked.

Notwithstanding the cold manner which he affected, Emmeline knew by this question that he was jealous. She believed that this proceeding of her husband was only an attempt to conciliate her, and this idea was painful to her. “All men are alike,” she thought, “they treat with contempt that which they possess, and return with ardor to that which they have lost through their own fault.” She wished to discover how far she had guessed correctly, and replied in a haughty manner:

“Yes, monsieur, I love him, and about that, at least, I will not lie.”

"I understand that," replied Monsieur de Marsan, "and it would ill become me to contend against any one, as I have neither the means nor the wish to do so."

Emmeline saw that she was mistaken; she wanted to speak, but she could not find words. What response, in short, could she make to the action of the count? He had clearly divined what had occurred, and the decision he had made was just without being cruel. She commenced a sentence and could not finish it, then she wept. Monsieur de Marsan said gently:

"Compose yourself; think that you have committed a fault, but that you have a friend who knows it, and who will help you to make reparation."

"What would this friend do," asked Emmeline, "if he were as rich as I am, since this miserable question of fortune decided him to leave me? What would you do if our contract did not exist?"

Emmeline rose, went to her writing-desk, took from it her contract of marriage and set it on fire with the candle which stood on the table. The count watched her until she had finished.

"I understand you," he said at last, "and although what you have just done is without any importance, as the duplicate is at the notary's, this act does you credit and I thank you for it. But consider, then," he added, as he embraced Emmeline, "consider, then, that if it were only a question of annulling a formality, I should only have abused my advantages. With one

stroke of your pen you could make me as rich as you are, I know ; but I would not consent to it ; to-day less than ever."

"Proud man that you are!" cried Emmeline despairingly, "and why, pray, would you refuse?"

Monsieur de Marsan took her hand, and as he pressed it lightly, he replied :

"Because you love him."

VIII

One bright autumn morning when the sun was shining with all its brilliancy, seeming to bid farewell to the departing verdure, Gilbert leaned upon his elbows at a little second-floor window in an out-of-the-way street behind the Champs-Élysées. Humming an air from *Norma*, he looked attentively at every carriage which passed. When it came to the corner of the street, his song ceased; but if the carriage continued on its way, then he knew he must wait for another. Many passed that day, but the anxious young man did not see in any of them a little Leghorn hat and black mantilla. One o'clock struck, then two; it was now too late, and after having looked at his watch twenty times, after having made as many turns in the room, having been alternately disconsolate and reassured still many more times, Gilbert

came outside and walked for some time under the trees. When he reached home, he asked the concierge if there were any letters, but received a negative reply. A presentiment of misfortune agitated him all the day. In the evening, about ten o'clock, he ascended the principal stairway of the residence of Monsieur de Marsan, not, however, fearlessly. He was surprised and disturbed to find the lamp was not lighted; he rang, no one answered; he touched the door, which opened of itself, and went into the dining-room. A chambermaid met him, and he asked if he could come in. "I will ask," she replied, as she entered the salon. Gilbert heard a trembling voice, which he recognized, and which said in a very low tone: "Say that I am not at home."

He told me himself that these few words, uttered in the dark at the moment when he least expected them, hurt him much more than a sword-thrust. He went away in an indescribable state of astonishment. "She was there," he said to himself, "and, without doubt, she saw me. What has happened? Could she not have said one word to me, or at least have written to me?" Eight days passed without letters, and without his being able to see the countess. At last he received the following letter:

"Adieu! It is necessary that you should remember your intention to travel and that you should keep your promise to me. Ah! I am making a terrible sacrifice at this moment. Some words, profoundly felt, which

you expressed to me on the subject of a fatal step which I wished to take, have alone stayed me. I will live. But it is not necessary to tear out entirely from my heart the one thought which can give me even the appearance of tranquillity. Permit me, my friend, to put it at a distance, only with conditions: if, for example, an absolute indifference for me take possession of your heart; if when you return with a whole heart you do not come to see me;—if ever my image, my love, come to you no more,—it is impossible to continue the frightful life which I lead. The one who remains is the more unhappy, therefore you must go. Will your affairs permit you? Or do you wish me to go? I know not whither. Answer me. You must have the courage, for I have none at all. Take pity upon me. Tell me, what do I know? That you will be cured; no, that cannot be true. Never mind, tell me so. Avoid seeing me before your departure; we must be strong, and I do not know where to find strength. I have not ceased to weep and write to you during eight days, but I have thrown everything into the fire. You will find this letter very incoherent. Monsieur de Marsan knows all. It was impossible for me to lie; besides, he knew it. This letter poorly expresses the contradictory feelings of my heart and my head. Go into society these coming days, that your departure may not seem rash. I can neither go out nor receive so soon. My voice fails me every moment.

Write to me, do. It will be impossible for you to go without sending me a few lines. To travel?—ah! it is you who are going away."

Gilbert's unhappiness seemed to him like a dream. He thought of going to Monsieur de Marsan and seeking some cause of quarrel with him. He fell on the floor of his chamber and wept most bitterly. At last he resolved to see the countess at any cost and have some explanation of this event which she had announced to him in such an unintelligible manner. He rushed to the De Marsan house, and without speaking to any servant he reached the salon. Then he stopped, thinking he might compromise the woman he loved, and perhaps lose her through his own fault. Hearing some one approach, he hid himself behind a curtain. It was the count who entered. When he was again alone, Gilbert came out, and partially opening the door of an alcove, he saw Emmeline lying on her bed with her husband near her. At the foot of the bed was a cloth covered with blood, and a physician was wiping his hands. He was horror-struck at the sight, and shuddered at the idea of adding, by his imprudence, to the misfortunes of his mistress, and walking on tiptoe, he left the house without being noticed.

Very soon he learned that the countess had been dangerously ill; a second letter told him in detail what had occurred.

“To renounce the joy of seeing each other,” Emmeline wrote, “is an impossibility, and not to be thought of. This idea, which distresses you, does not cause me the least pain, for I cannot admit it for an instant. But to be separated for one year, for six months, ah ! that makes me weep and rends my soul, for that is all that is possible.” She added that before his departure, if he very urgently desired to see her once again, she would consent to it. He refused this interview, as he needed all his strength, and though convinced of the necessity of going away, he could make no decision. To live without Emmeline seemed to him an idea void of sense, or, so to speak, an illusion. He, nevertheless, vowed to obey at all risks and to sacrifice his life, if need be, for the peace of Madame de Marsan.

He put his affairs in order; announced to his friends, as he bade adieu, that he would travel in Italy. When all was ready, and he had his passport, he shut himself up in his room, promising himself each evening to set out next day, and passed the day in weeping.

Emmeline was hardly more courageous, as you can imagine. As soon as she was well enough to ride in a carriage she went to the Moulin de May. Monsieur de Marsan did not leave her, and during her illness he showed her the friendship of a brother and the care of a mother. I need not tell you that he had pardoned her, and the sight of his wife’s sufferings had caused

him to give up his idea of separation. He spoke no more of Gilbert, and I believe since that time he has never spoken his name when alone with the countess. He learned of the proposed departure, and appeared neither joyous nor sad over it. It is easy to see by his conduct that at the bottom of his heart he felt he had been guilty of neglecting his wife and of having done very little for her happiness. When Emmeline walked slowly with him, supported by his arm in the *Alley of Sighs*, he appeared almost as sad as she, and Emmeline appreciated his never attempting to awaken the old nor to combat the new love.

She burned Gilbert's letters, and in this sad sacrifice kept only one solitary line written by her lover: "*For you, everything in the world.*" In rereading these words, she could not bring herself to destroy them; it was the poor fellow's farewell. She cut off this line with her scissors, and wore it for a long time next her heart. "Should I ever find it necessary to part with these words, I shall swallow them," she wrote Gilbert; "my life now is only a pinch of ashes, and I cannot, for a long time, look at my fire-place without weeping."

You will ask, perhaps, Was she sincere? Did she make no attempt to see her lover again? Did she not repent of her sacrifice? Did she never attempt to break her resolution? Yes, madame, she did attempt it; I do not wish to make her better or braver than she was. Yes, she tried to lie; to deceive her husband.

In spite of her vows, her promises, her sorrow, and her remorse, she saw Gilbert again, and after having passed two hours with him in a delirium of joy and love, she felt on returning home that she could neither deceive nor lie. I will also tell you that Gilbert felt this himself, and did not ask her to come again.

However, he did not go away, and no longer talked of it. At the end of several days he already wished to persuade himself that he was calmer and that there was no danger in his remaining. He endeavored in his letters to make Emmeline consent to his passing the winter in Paris. She hesitated, and while renouncing love, she began to speak of friendship. Both of them sought a thousand motives to prolong their sufferings, or at least to see each other suffer. How will it end? I do not know.

I believe, madame, I have told you that Emmeline had a sister. She was a handsome and tall young girl, with an excellent heart. Whether from excessive timidity or from some other reason, she had never spoken to Gilbert, except with great reserve,—almost with repugnance,—when she had occasion to meet him. Gilbert's manners were thoughtless, and his ways of speaking, although simple and natural, would wound the modesty and bashfulness of a young girl. Even the frankness of the young man, and his enthusiastic character, would meet with little sympathy from the severe Sarah—such was the name of Emmeline's sister. Therefore, a few

polite words exchanged by chance, a compliment when Sarah sang, a dance together from time to time, was all the acquaintance they had with each other, and their friendship did not go any farther.

While these last events were taking place, Gilbert received an invitation to a ball from one of Madame de Marsan's friends, and he thought he ought to accept, in accordance with the wishes of his mistress. Sarah was at this ball. He seated himself at her side. He knew the tender affection between the countess and her sister, and this was an occasion when he could talk of his beloved one to some one who would understand him. Her recent illness served as an excuse; for to learn about Emmeline's health was to learn about her love. Contrary to her custom, Sarah replied with gentleness and confidence, and in the middle of their conversation, the orchestra having given the signal for a quadrille, she said that she was tired and excused herself from her partner, who came to claim her.

The noise of the instruments and the bustle of the dancing giving them greater liberty, the young girl allowed Gilbert to understand that she knew the cause of Emmeline's unhappiness. She spoke of her sister's sufferings and related what she had seen of it. During this conversation, Gilbert sat with bowed head, and when he raised it, tears were running down his cheeks. Suddenly Sarah trembled and her beautiful blue eyes grew dim. "You love her more than I thought," she said.

From this moment, her bearing toward him underwent a complete change. She admitted that for a long time she had noticed what was happening, and the coldness she had shown him was due to the fact that she believed she saw in him only the thoughtlessness of a man of the world, who makes love to every woman without thinking of the suffering that may arise from it. She spoke as a sister and as a friend, with warmth and frankness. The accent of truth which she used to show the absolute necessity of bringing peace to the countess struck him more than all else could have done, and in a quarter of an hour he saw his destiny clearly.

Preparations were being made for the cotillion. "Let us seat ourselves in the circle," said Gilbert; "we need not take part, and we can talk without being remarked." She consented. They took their places, and continued to talk of Emmeline. From time to time, however, some one waltzing forced Sarah to take part in the figure, and she was obliged to rise to hold the end of a scarf, a bouquet, or a fan.

Gilbert remained seated at these times, lost in thought regarding his beautiful partner waltzing and smiling, her eyes still moist. She returned, and they continued their sad conversation. It was during the strains of the same German waltzes, which had cradled the first days of his love, that Gilbert vowed to depart and forget Emmeline.



When the time for leaving had arrived, they both rose with a sort of solemnity. "I have your word," said the young girl, "I depend upon you to save my sister; and if you go," she added, taking him by the hand without thinking that it would be noticed, "if you go, sometimes there will be two to think of the poor wanderer."

At these words they separated, and Gilbert left Paris the following day.





THE SON OF TITIAN

1838









I

In the month of February, in the year 1580, a young man crossed the Piazzetta, in Venice, at daybreak. His dress was in disorder, and his toque, from which floated a beautiful scarlet feather, was pushed down over his ears. He walked quickly toward the Riva degli Schiavoni, his sword and cloak dragging behind him, while with a disdainful stride he stepped over the fishermen crouching in his path. When he reached the Ponte della Paglia, he stopped and gazed at the surroundings. The moon was setting behind the Giudecca, and the first

rays of the rising sun gilded the Ducal palace. From a neighboring palace rose a dense smoke, while a brilliant gleam flashed from time to time. Great pieces of timber, stones, enormous blocks of marble, and a thousand débris encumbered the canal of the Prisons. A fire had just destroyed the house of a patrician, situated in the centre of the canal. By the showers of sparks which sprang up at moments, one could see in the sinister glare an armed soldier watching in the midst of the ruins.

However, our young man did not seem struck, either by this spectacle of destruction, or by the beauty of the heavens which were tinged with the freshest shades. He looked for some time at the horizon, in order to divert his dazzled eyes; but the light of day seemed to produce a disagreeable effect on him, for he wrapped himself in his cloak and continued his way running. Soon he stopped once more, and knocked at the door of a palace. A valet, holding a light in his hand, opened it for him. On entering, he turned around, and, looking again at the heavens, he exclaimed :

“By Bacchus! my carnival is very costly.”

This young man’s name was Pomponio Filippo Vescellio. He was the second son of Titian, a child full of spirit and imagination, who had given his father the happiest hopes, but his passion for gambling plunged him into continual trouble. It was only four years since the almost simultaneous death of the great painter and his eldest son Orazio, and during this time young

Pippo had squandered the greater part of the immense fortune which this double heritage had given him. Instead of cultivating the talents which nature had given him, and sustaining the glory of his name, he spent his days in sleep, and his nights in gambling at the house of a certain Countess Orsini, or at least a so-called countess, whose profession was to ruin the youth of Venice. At her house assembled each evening a numerous company, composed of nobles and courtesans; there they supped and played; and, as they did not pay for the supper, it goes without saying that the dice were the means of indemnifying the mistress of the house. While the sequins vanished in piles, the wine of Cyprus flowed; soft glances were exchanged, and the victims, doubly dazzled, left the place, deprived of their money and their reason.

It is from this dangerous place that we have just seen the hero of this tale emerge. He has made more than one loss in the night. Besides having emptied his pockets by dice-throwing, there had perished in the flames at the Dolfino palace the only picture he had ever finished, a picture, moreover, which the connoisseurs pronounced excellent. It was a historical subject treated with feeling and a boldness of touch almost worthy of Titian himself. Sold to a wealthy senator, this canvas had shared the fate of a great number of precious works; the imprudence of a valet had reduced these treasures to ashes. But this was Pippo's least care; he

thought only of the treacherous luck which had followed him with unusual bitterness, and of the dice by whose throw he had suffered loss.

As soon as he entered, he raised the table-cover and counted the money which remained in the drawer; then, as he was naturally of a gay and careless nature, after he was undressed, he sat at his window, in his dressing-gown. Observing that it was broad daylight, he hesitated as to whether he would close his shutters and go to bed or get up, like the rest of the world. It had been a long time since he had seen the sun rise, and he found the heavens more joyous than usual. Before deciding whether to watch or to go to sleep, while struggling against sleep, he took his chocolate on the balcony. When his eyes closed, he thought he saw a table, trembling hands, pale faces; he heard the dice-box resound. "What fatal chance!" he murmured. "Is it possible one loses with fifteen!" And he saw his usual adversary, old Vespasiano Memmo, throw eighteen and gain all the gold heaped upon the table. He promptly reopened his lids to dissipate this bad dream, and watched the young girls passing on the quay. He thought he saw at a distance a masked woman; he was astonished, for although it was the season of the carnival, poor people do not mask; and it was strange that a Venetian lady should go out alone, and on foot, at such an hour;¹ but he found that what he had taken for a mask was really the face of a negress; and, as

she drew nearer, he found her comely of form. She walked quickly, and the wind blew her flower-covered dress against her form and showed her graceful outline. Pippo leaned over the balcony, and was surprised to see that the negress knocked at his door.

The doorkeeper was slow to open it.

“What do you wish?” cried the young man; “is your business with me, brunette? My name is Vecellio, and if they keep you waiting, I am going to open the door myself.”

The negress raised her head.

“Your name is Pomponio Vecellio?”

“Yes, or Pippo, as you like.”

“You are the son of Titian?”

“At your service; what can I do for you?”

After having thrown a hurried, curious glance at Pippo, the negress stepped back a little way and adroitly threw on the balcony a little box wrapped in paper, then she quickly ran away, looking back from time to time. Pippo picked up the box, and, on opening it, found a pretty purse wrapped in cotton. He suspected, naturally, that he would find a note under the cotton which would explain this adventure. The note was indeed there, but it was as mysterious as the rest, for it contained only these words:

“Do not spend too lightly what I hold; when you go out, place in me one piece of gold, it is enough for

one day ; and if something of it remains in the evening, however little, you will find some pauper who will thank you for it.”

When the young man had turned the box a hundred ways, examined the purse, looked again at the quay, and had finally concluded that he could find out no more about it, he murmured : “ I must say that this is a curious present, and cruelly inappropriate. The advice that it gives me is good ; but it is too late to tell people that they are drowning when they are already at the bottom of the Adriatic. Who the devil could have sent me that ? ”

Pippo had easily recognized that the negress was a servant. He began to search his memory for the woman or the friend capable of sending him this, and, as he was not overburdened with modesty, he easily persuaded himself that it was a woman rather than one of his male friends. The purse was of velvet, embroidered with gold, and of too exquisite a finish, he thought, to have come out of any shop. He then passed in mental review all the most beautiful women of Venice ; next, those who were less so ; but he stopped there, wondering how that would help him to discover who had sent him the purse. He made the sweetest and most daring dreams about it ; more than once he thought he had divined it, and his heart beat as he forced himself to recognize the writing. There was a

Bolognese princess who formed her capitals like these, and a beautiful lady of Brescia whose handwriting was a little like this.

Nothing is more unpleasant than a disagreeable idea presenting itself all at once in the midst of such dreams; it is a little like stepping on a serpent when walking through a meadow in bloom. This is what Pippo felt when he suddenly remembered a certain *Monna Bianchina*, who had troubled him singularly for some time. He had had an adventure with this woman at a masquerade, and she was pretty enough, but he had no love for her. *Monna Bianchina*, on the contrary, had conceived a sudden passion for him, and she even imagined that she saw love in what were the mere attentions of politeness; she became attached to him, wrote to him often, and wearied him with tender reproaches; but one day, on leaving her house, he had sworn never to go there again, and he had scrupulously kept his word. He thought then that *Monna Bianchina* might well have made him the purse and sent it to him. This suspicion destroyed his gaiety and dispelled the illusions he had been cherishing. The more he reflected, the more he found this supposition reasonable. In a bad humor, he closed the window and decided to go to bed.

But he could not sleep. In spite of the probabilities, it was impossible for him to relinquish a doubt which flattered his pride. He continued to dream involuntarily: sometimes he tried to forget the purse and to

think no more about it ; then he wished to deny even the existence of *Monna Bianchina* that he might search more at his ease. Meanwhile he had drawn his curtains and moved away from the side of the street so as not to see the daylight ; all at once he leaped to the foot of his bed and called his servants. He had just thought of something very simple which, at first, had not occurred to him. *Monna Bianchina* was not rich, she had only one servant, and this servant was not a negress, but a great Chioggian girl. How could she have procured for this occasion this unknown messenger whom *Pippo* had never seen in Venice ? “Blest be thy black face,” he cried, “and the African sun which colored it !” And without more delay, he asked for his doublet and ordered his gondola.

II

He had decided to pay a visit to the *Signora Dorotea*, wife of the advocate *Pasqualigo*. This lady, respected and advanced in years, was one of the richest and cleverest persons in the republic ; she was, besides, *Pippo*’s godmother ; and, as there was not a distinguished person in Venice whom she did not know, he hoped that she would be able to help him to discover

the mystery which troubled him. Thinking, however, that it was too early to present himself at the house of his protectress, he passed the interval in promenading under the Procuraties.

By an accident of chance, he encountered there Monna Bianchina, who was bargaining for fabrics; he went into the shop, and, without knowing why, after some unimportant talk, he said to her: "Monna Bianchina, you sent me a very pretty present this morning, and gave me with it very wise counsel; I thank you humbly for it."

By expressing himself with this air of certainty, he hoped to rid himself at once of the doubt which tormented him; but Monna Bianchina was too keen to show any astonishment until she had decided whether it was to her interest to manifest it. Although she had really sent nothing to the young man, she saw that there was a way to make him think so. She replied, it is true, that she did not understand what he was talking about; but she took care, in saying that, to smile with so much *finesse* and blush so modestly that Pippo was convinced, in spite of appearances, that the purse came from her.

"How long have you had that pretty negress at your command?" he asked her.

Disconcerted by this question, and not knowing what to say, Monna Bianchina hesitated a moment; then, with a burst of laughter, she brusquely left Pippo.

Alone and disappointed, he renounced the visit he had intended. He returned home, threw the purse in a corner, and thought no more about it.

It happened, however, some days later, that he lost at play a large sum upon his promise to pay.

As he went out to pay this debt, it seemed convenient to make use of this purse, which was large, and looked well in his belt; he took it, therefore, and the same evening played again and lost.

“Will you go on?” asked Master Vespasiano, the old notary of the chancellor’s office, when Pippo had no more money.

“No,” he replied, “I do not want to play on honor.”

“But I will lend you what you wish,” cried the Countess Orsini.

“And I also,” said Master Vespasiano.

“And I also,” repeated the sweet and sonorous voice of one of the numerous nieces of the countess; “but reopen your purse, Signor Vecellio; there is still a sequin in it.”

Pippo smiled, and found, indeed, at the bottom of the purse, a sequin that he had forgotten. “All right,” he said, “let us play again; but I will not risk more than this.” He took the dice-box, won, and again resumed play, doubling the stakes; in short, at the end of an hour he had repaired his loss of the day before, as well as that of the evening. “Will you go

on?" he asked, in turn, of Master Vespasiano, who had now nothing before him.

"No! for I must be a great fool to let myself be cleaned out by a man who had only a sequin. Curse that purse! It is, no doubt, possessed of some occult virtue."

The notary, enraged, went out of the hall. Pippo started to follow him, when the niece, who had given him the hint, said to him laughingly:

"Since it is to me that you owe your good fortune, make me a present of the sequin which brought you success."

This sequin had a little mark which made it recognizable. Pippo looked for it, found it, and held out his hand to give it to the pretty niece, then all at once he cried:

"Faith! my beautiful one, you cannot have that! but, to show you that I am not stingy, here are ten which I beg you to accept. As for that one, I am going to follow a piece of advice recently given me, and I make a present of it to Providence." Thus saying, he threw the sequin out of the window.

"Is it possible," he thought, on returning home, "that Monna Bianchina's purse brings me good luck? That would be a curious freak of chance, if a thing, in itself disagreeable to me, should possess an influence favorable to me."

It seemed to him, in fact, that every time he used that purse, he won. When he put one piece of gold

in it, he could not help feeling a certain superstitious respect for it, and he reflected some time, in spite of himself, on the true words he had found at the bottom of the box. "A sequin is a sequin," he said, "and there are people who have not one a day." This thought made him less imprudent, and caused him to somewhat restrain his expenses.

Unfortunately, *Monna Bianchina* had not forgotten her interview with *Pippo* under the *Procuraties*. In order to confirm him in his error, she sent him from time to time a bouquet, or some trifle, accompanied by some written words. I have already said that he was very tired of these importunities, to which he had determined not to respond.

Now it happened that *Monna Bianchina*, pushed to extremes by this coldness, attempted an audacious proceeding very displeasing to the young man. She presented herself alone at his house, during his absence, and, by virtue of a gift of money to a servant, succeeded in concealing herself in his apartment. On entering, he found her there, and was forced to tell her, without preface, that he had no love for her and that he desired her to leave him alone.

Monna, who, as I have said, was pretty, flew into a violent rage; she heaped reproaches on *Pippo*; but this time they were not of a tender nature. She told him that he had deceived her by speaking of love, that she considered he had compromised her, and that she would

be revenged. Pippo, after listening to these reproaches, became irritated in his turn ; and, in order to prove to her that he feared nothing, he forced her to take back a bouquet he had received from her that morning ; and as the purse was near at hand : "Here," he said, "take that also ; that purse brought me good luck, but understand by this that I will have nothing to do with you."

Scarcely had he yielded to this momentary anger than he regretted it. Monna Bianchina took care not to undeceive him as to the lie she had told him. She was filled with rage, but also with dissimulation. She took the purse and went out, determined to make Pippo repent of his treatment of her.

He played that evening as usual, and lost ; on the days following he was not more fortunate. Master Vespasiano had always the better throw, and gained from him considerable sums. He revolted against his fortune and his superstition, he persevered obstinately, and lost again. Finally, one day when he was leaving the Countess Orsini's, he could not help exclaiming on the stairway : "God pardon me, I believe that old fool was right and that my purse was bewitched ! for I have not had a favorable throw since I gave it back to the Bianchina."

At this moment he saw floating before him a flowered gown, beneath which showed two fine and nimble legs ; it was the mysterious negress. He quickened his pace, accosted her, and asked her who she was and to whom she belonged.

“Who knows?” replied the African, with a malicious smile.

“You do, I suppose. Are you not the servant of Monna Bianchina?”

“No; who is Monna Bianchina?”

“Ah! by the gods, she who sent you the other day to bring me a box which you threw on my balcony.”

“Oh! Your Excellency, I do not think so.”

“I know it, do not try to deceive me, for she herself told me so.”

“If she told you —” replied the negress, with an air of hesitation. She shrugged her shoulders, thought a moment; then, giving Pippo a little tap on the cheek with her fan, she called to him as she ran away:

“My pretty fellow, somebody is playing a trick on you.”

The streets of Venice are such complicated labyrinths, they cross each other in so many ways, by caprices so varied and unexpected, that Pippo, after having allowed the girl to escape, did not attempt to rejoin her. He remained where he was, embarrassed, for he had committed two faults,—the first, in giving the purse to Bianchina, and the second, in not retaining the negress. Wandering at hazard in the city, he directed his steps, without knowing why, to the palace of the Signora Dorotea, his godmother. He regretted not having made his projected visit to this lady before. It was his custom to consult her upon all that interested

him, and rarely had he had recourse to her without gaining some advantage.

He found her alone in the garden, and after having kissed her hand, he said to her: "Judge, my good godmother, of a foolish thing I have just done. Some one a little while ago sent me a purse ——"

But scarcely had he pronounced these words, when the signora began to laugh: "Ah, well!" she said, "was it not a pretty purse? Didn't you think the golden flowers made a fine effect upon the red velvet?"

"How is this?" cried the young man; "can it be that you know all about it? ——"

At this moment several senators entered the garden; the old lady rose to receive them, and did not reply to the questions which Pippo in his astonishment put to her unceasingly.

III

When the senators had gone, the Signora Dorotea, in spite of her godson's importunities, did not wish to explain further. She was sorry that her first movement of gaiety had allowed her to acknowledge that she knew the secret of an adventure in which she did not wish to be concerned. But as Pippo still insisted:

“My dear child,” she said, “all that I can say is, that it is true that, in giving you the name of the person who embroidered that purse for you, I should perhaps render you a good service; for this person is assuredly one of the most noble and most beautiful women in Venice. Let that suffice, then. In spite of my desire to oblige you, I must keep silent. I cannot betray a secret which I alone possess, and I will only tell you when I am allowed to do so; for then it would be honorable.”

“Honorable, my dear godmother? but can you believe in confiding to me alone —”

“I hear,” replied the old lady. And as she could not restrain a little mischievousness in spite of her dignity: “Since you make verses sometimes,” she added, “why don’t you write a sonnet about it?”

Seeing that he could obtain nothing more, Pippo stopped insisting; but his curiosity, as you may imagine, was extreme. He remained to dinner with the advocate Pasqualigo, not being able to tear himself away from his godmother, hoping that his beautiful unknown would come to pay her a visit that evening; but he saw only senators, magistrates, and the most dignified element of the republic.

At sundown the young man separated himself from the company, and went to sit in a little arbor. He thought over what he would do, and decided on two things: he would obtain the purse from Monna Bianchina, and follow, in the second place, the counsel

given him in fun by the Signora Dorotea ; that is to say, write a sonnet upon his adventure. He resolved, besides, to give this sonnet, when finished, to his god-mother, who, without doubt, would show it to the beautiful unknown. With no further delay, he set out immediately to accomplish his double project.

After having adjusted his doublet, and posed his toque carefully on the side of his head, he looked at himself in the glass to see that his appearance satisfied him ; for his first idea had been to seduce Bianchina anew by pretended protestations of love, and to persuade her by fond means ; but he soon renounced this project, reflecting that he would thus only reanimate this woman's passion and prepare new opportunities for himself. He decided on the reverse course ; he ran to her house in all haste, as if he were furious ; he prepared to make a desperate scene, and to frighten her so that she would keep quiet forever after.

Monna Bianchina was one of those Venetians, blondes with black eyes, whose resentment has, in all times, been regarded as dangerous. Since he had so badly treated her, Pippo had received no message, and she was no doubt preparing, in silence, her threatened vengeance. He must, then, strike a decisive blow, even if he augmented the evil. She was just going out when the young man arrived at her house ; he stopped her on the stairway and forced her to re-enter her room.

“Wretched woman!” he cried, “what have you done? You have destroyed my hopes, and your vengeance is accomplished.”

“Good God! what has happened to you?” asked the stupefied Bianchina.

“You dare to ask! Where is that purse that you said came from you? Will you dare to repeat that lie?”

“What difference does it make whether I lied or not? I do not know what has become of the purse.”

“You will either give it to me or I will kill you,” cried Pippo, throwing himself upon her. And without respect for a new dress which the poor woman had just decked herself in, he violently tore away the lace which covered her bosom and placed his poniard over her heart.

Bianchina thought her hour had come, and commenced to call for help; but Pippo stuffed his handkerchief into her mouth, and without being able to utter a sound, he forced her to give him back the purse which, happily, she had preserved. “You have wrecked the fortunes of a powerful family,” he then said to her: “you have spoiled forever the existence of one of the most illustrious houses of Venice! Tremble! this formidable house is watching over you; neither you nor your husband shall take a single step now, without an eye being upon you. The grand masters of the Night have your name inscribed on their books. Think of the cells in the Ducal palace. At the first word you speak

to reveal the terrible secret of which your wickedness has gained possession, your whole family will disappear ! ”

He left her after these words, and everybody knows that in Venice no more frightful words can be pronounced. The pitiless and secret arrests of the *corte maggiore* spread such great terror that those who believed themselves only suspected, already regarded themselves as dead. It was just that which happened to Monna’s husband, Master Orio, to whom she related a part of the threat which Pippo had just made her. It is true that she was ignorant of the motive, and, in fact, Pippo himself was ignorant of it, as this affair was all a fable. But Orio judged, prudently, that it was not necessary to know in what way they had attracted the wrath of the supreme court, and that the most important thing was to get away. He was not born in Venice, his parents lived on the mainland ; he embarked with his wife the following day, and they were heard of no more. It was thus that Pippo found means to rid himself of Bianchina, and to pay back, with interest, the injury she had done him. She believed, all her life, that, in connection with the purse she had tried to steal, there was some state secret, and as all was mystery for her in this strange adventure, she could only conjecture about it. The relatives of Orio made it the subject of their private conversations. As a result, they ended by creating a plausible fable : “A great lady,”

they said, “was in love with Tizianello, that is to say, the son of Titian, who was in love with *Monna Bianchina*, and naturally did not concern himself about her. Now this great lady, who had herself embroidered a purse for Tizianello, could be no other than the *dogaressa* in person. One can imagine her anger on learning that Tizianello had presented this love-token to *Bianchina*.” Such was the family chronicle which they repeated under their breath at Padua in the little house of Master Orio.

Satisfied with the success of his first enterprise, our hero turned his attention to his second. He undertook to make a sonnet for his beautiful unknown. As the strange comedy he had played had moved him in spite of himself, he commenced by writing rapidly some verses which breathed a certain poetical rapture. Hope, love, mystery, all the ordinary passionate expressions of poetry, crowded his brain. “But,” he thought, “my godmother told me that this affair was with one of the noblest and most beautiful ladies of Venice; I must then, maintain a conventional tone, and approach her with the greatest respect.”

He tore up what he had written, and going to the other extreme, he collected some harmonious rhymes in which he endeavored to incorporate, not without difficulty, thoughts suitable to his lady; that is to say, the most beautiful and the most noble that he could find. For bold hope, he substituted a shrinking doubt; instead of mystery and love, he spoke of respect and gratitude.

Not being able to celebrate the charms of a woman whom he had never seen, he used the greatest possible delicacy, employing vague terms which could be applied to any face. In short, after two hours of work and reflection, he had made a dozen passable verses, very harmonious and decidedly insignificant.

He put them neatly on a beautiful skin of parchment, and illuminated the margin with carefully-colored designs of birds and flowers. But no sooner were his stanzas finished, than he reread them and threw them out of the window into the canal which passed near his house. "What am I doing?" he asked himself; "what is the use of following this adventure if my conscience does not speak?"

He took his mandolin and strode up and down his room, singing and accompanying himself to an old air composed for a sonnet of Petrarch. At the end of a quarter of an hour he stopped; his heart was beating rapidly. He thought no more of conventionalities, nor of the effect he would produce. The purse which he had wrested from Bianchina and which he had just brought back in triumph, lay upon the table. He looked at it.

"The woman who made that for me," he said, "ought to love me and to know how to love. Such a work is long and difficult; those light threads, those vivid colors, take time; and while working on it, she thought of me. In the few words which accompanied

that purse, there was the counsel of a friend and not an equivocal word. That is a love-token sent by a woman of heart; had she thought of me for only one day, I would have taken up the gauntlet."

He set to work again, and, in taking up his pen, he was more agitated by fear and hope than when he staked the largest sums on a throw of the dice. Without reflecting and without stopping, he dashed off a sonnet of which the translation is something like this:

When but a child, I read Petrarch's immortal lays,
And my soul receptive, some glory longed to share.
He loved as a poet, he praised in song with lover's phrase;
But only he celestial language could declare.

Only he the secret knew in flight to ensnare
The heart-throbs that but a fleeting moment endure,
And, enriched by a smile, their true image lay bare
With facile stylet of gold on diamond pure.

O ye that yesterday your thoughts to me expressed,
But to forget them all ere wings another day,
Bethink ye of me who am your debtor confessed.

I am by Petrarch's soul, but not his mind, possessed;
I only dare outreach my hand on life's harsh way
To him who calls me, whom my life may have impressed.

Pippo presented himself the next day at the house of the Signora Dorotea. When he found himself alone with her, he placed the sonnet on the illustrious lady's

lap, saying: "That is for your friend." The signora at first appeared surprised, then read the verses, and vowed that she would not promise to show them to any one. But Pippo only laughed at this, as he believed to the contrary, and left her, assuring himself that he need feel no uneasiness on that subject.

IV

He passed the week following, however, in the greatest trouble; but this trouble was not without charm. He did not go out at all, and scarcely dared to move for fear of destroying his good fortune. In that he acted with more wisdom than is usual at his age, for he was only twenty-five, and the impatience of youth often makes us overleap the end in wishing to attain it too quickly. Fortune requires that a man should help himself, and know how to seize his opportunity; for, according to the expression of Napoleon, she is feminine. But for this same reason, she likes to have the air of according what is snatched from her, and we must give her time to open her hand.

It was the ninth day, toward evening, when the capricious goddess knocked at the young man's door; and it was not for nothing, as you are going to see. He

went down and opened it himself. The negress was upon the threshold ; she held in her hand a rose which she raised to Pippo's lips.

“Kiss this flower,” she said ; “there is, within, a kiss from my mistress. Can she come to see you without danger ?”

“It would be a great imprudence,” replied Pippo ; “if she came in daylight, my servants could not help seeing her. Is it possible for her to come at night ?”

“No ; who would dare in her place ? She can neither go out at night nor receive you at her house.”

“Then she must come to some other place than this, some place of which I will tell you.”

“No, it is here that she wishes to come ; you can take precautions.”

Pippo reflected for a moment. “Can your mistress get up early ?” he asked the negress.

“At sunrise.”

“Well, listen. I generally rise very late, consequently all my household sleep the best part of the morning. If your mistress will come at daybreak, I will wait for her and she can enter without being seen by any one. As for her going out again, I will take care of that, if she could remain with me until nightfall.”

“She will do it. Would you like her to come to-morrow ?”

"To-morrow, at sunrise," said Pippo. He slipped a handful of sequins under the ruffle of the messenger, then, without saying more, he regained his chamber and shut himself in, determined to watch until daylight. He commenced to undress to give the impression that he was going to bed ; then, when he was alone, he lit a good fire, put on a gold-embroidered shirt, a perfumed collar, and a doublet of white velvet with sleeves of China satin ; then, all being ready, he seated himself at the window to think over his adventure.

He did not think so unfavorably as one might suppose, of the promptitude with which his lady had given him a rendezvous. We must not forget, though, that this story took place in the sixteenth century, and love made more rapid progress in those days than in ours. Judging from the most authentic witnesses, it seems certain that what we call indelicacies passed at that epoch for sincerity, and there is even reason to think that what we call virtue to-day, passed then for hypocrisy. If a woman in love with a fine fellow should give herself to him without long persuasion, he thought no less of her for that : no one thought of blushing at what seemed to him natural. This was the time when a gentleman of the court of France wore on his hat, instead of a plume, the silk stocking of his mistress, and to those who were astonished to see him at the Louvre in this guise, he replied, without embarrassment, that it was the stocking of a woman who made him die of love.

Such was Pippo's character; moreover, had he been born in this century, he would not, perhaps, have changed his opinion on this subject. In spite of much dissipation and folly, if he were capable of lying sometimes to others, he never lied to himself. I mean to say by that, that he liked things for what they were worth and not for the appearances, and although an adept in dissimulation, he employed deceit only when his desire was real. If he thought that there was only caprice in the present which had been made him, at least he did not believe it to be the caprice of a coquette. I have already told his reason for this, which was the great care and finesse with which his purse was embroidered and the time it must have taken to do it.

While his mind enjoyed, in advance, the happiness which was promised him, he recalled a Turkish marriage which some one had told him about. When an Oriental takes a wife, he does not see the face of his fiancée until after the marriage. She remained veiled before him as before the rest of the world. Orientals believe what their parents tell them, and thus marry upon their word. The ceremony concluded, the young woman shows herself to her husband, who then tests for himself whether the bargain has been good or bad. As there is no way to undo it, there is nothing better to do than to find it good, and really we do not see that these unions are more unfortunate than others.

Pippo found himself precisely in the same case as an engaged Turk: it is true, he did not expect to find a virgin in his unknown lady; but he consoled himself easily for that; besides, he had this difference to his advantage, that it was not so solemn a tie which he was going to contract. He could give himself up to the charms of expectation and surprise without dreading the inconvenience; and that consideration seemed to him sufficient to make amends for whatever might be lacking in it. He imagined, then, that this was really his nuptial night, and it is not astonishing that at his age this thought gave him transports of joy.

The first night of marriage ought, in fact, for an active imagination, to be one of the greatest joys possible, for it is preceded by no trouble. Philosophers, it is true, say that trouble gives more savor to the pleasure which it accompanies; but Pippo thought that a poor sauce did not make the fish fresher. He liked joys easily attained; but he did not wish them common, and, unfortunately, it is an almost invariable law that the most exquisite pleasures cost dearly. Now the marriage night makes an exception to this rule; it is a unique occasion in the life, which satisfies at once the two dearest tastes of man, slothfulness and lust. Marriage leads into a young man's chamber a woman crowned with flowers, who is ignorant of love and whose mother for fifteen years has tried only to elevate her soul and adorn her mind. In order to obtain a

glance from this beautiful creature, he would perhaps have to plead for an entire year; however, to possess this treasure, the husband has but to open his arms—the mother retires, God himself permits it. If, in waking from so beautiful a dream, one find that he is not married, who would not wish to go through it every evening?

Pippo did not regret not having questioned the negress; for a servant, in such a case, could not fail to eulogize her mistress, even if she were uglier than mortal sin; and the two words which had escaped the Signora Dorotea sufficed. He would simply have liked to know if the unknown lady were a brunette or a blonde. In order to form an idea of a woman, when we know that she is beautiful, nothing is more important than to know the color of her hair. Pippo hesitated a long time between the two colors; finally, he imagined that she had auburn hair, to quiet his mind on this point.

But he could not then decide the color of her eyes; he would have said black if she had been a brunette, and blue if she had been a blonde. He pictured them as being blue, not that light-blue which is sometimes gray and sometimes green, but that pure azure of the heavens, which in moments of passion takes a darker shade, and becomes as sombre as the raven's wing.

Scarcely had these charming eyes appeared to him with a deep, tender expression, than his imagination surmounted them with a brow as white as snow, and two

rosy cheeks like the rays of the sun on the summit of the Alps. Between these two cheeks, as sweet as a peach, he imagined a nose as fine as that of the antique bust called the Greek Love. Below, a vermillion mouth, neither too large nor too small, through which passed between two rows of pearls a fresh and voluptuous breath; the chin was well formed and slightly rounded; the expression frank, but a little proud. Upon a throat a little long, without a crease, and of an ivory whiteness, this gracious and sympathetic all-harmonious head balanced itself sweetly as a flower on its stem. This beautiful image, created by fancy, only lacked being real. "She is coming," thought Pippo, "she will be here at day-break;" and it is not the least surprising, in the strange reverie which he had just made, that he had, without knowing it, drawn the faithful portrait of his future mistress.

When the frigate of state, which watches at the entrance of the port, fired its cannon to announce six o'clock in the morning, Pippo saw that the light of his lamp became red, and that a light bluish tint colored his windows. He immediately took his place at the casement. This time it was not with half-closed eyes that he looked about him. Although his night had been passed without sleep, he never felt more free and active. The sun commenced to rise, but Venice still slept: this lazy country of pleasure does not awaken so early. At the hour when, with us, the shops are opened, the thoroughfares crowded, carriages rolling,

mists alone appear on the deserted lagoons, and cover the silent palaces as a curtain. The wind hardly rippled the water; some sails appear afar off from the side, of Fusina, bringing to the Queen of the Sea the provisions for the day. Alone, on the summit of the sleeping city, the angel of the Campanile of Saint Mark's stands out brilliant in the dawn, and the first rays of the sun glisten on its golden wings.

Meanwhile, the innumerable churches of Venice sounded the Angelus loudly; the pigeons of the republic, warned by the sound of the clocks, which, by their marvellous instinct, they knew how to count, crossed the Riva degli Schiavoni in flocks, at a single flight, to find on the *Grande Place* the grain which is regularly provided for them at this hour. The fog lifts, little by little, and the sun appears. Some fishermen throw off their cloaks, and commence to clean their boats. One of them sings, in a clear, pure voice, a couplet of a national air; from the depths of a merchant vessel, a bass voice replies to him; another, farther off, joins in the refrain of the second couplet; soon the choir is organized, each takes his part while working, and a beautiful matinal song salutes the dawning day.

Pippo's house was situated on the quay of the Schiavoni, not far from the Nani palace, at the angle of a little canal. At this instant, at the end of this obscure canal, glistened the prow of a gondola. A single gondolier was upon the poop, but the frail boat cut the

water with the rapidity of an arrow, and seemed to glide upon the thick mirror into which its flat oar sank with rhythmic time. When it passed under the bridge which separates the canal from the great lagoon, the gondola stopped. A masked woman, of tall, graceful form, got out and turned toward the quay. Pippo immediately went down and advanced to meet her. "Is it you?" he said, in a low voice. She replied by taking the hand which he presented to her, and followed him. No servant was yet up in the house; without saying a word, they crossed on tiptoe the lower gallery where the doorkeeper slept. Upon reaching the young man's apartment, the lady seated herself on a sofa and remained pensive for some time. She took off her mask. Pippo saw then that the Signora Dorotea had not deceived him, and that he had, indeed, before him one of the most beautiful women in Venice, an heiress of two noble families, Beatrice Loredano, widow of the procurator Donato.

V

It is impossible to render in words the beauty of Beatrice's expression when she first looked about her after uncovering her face. Although she had been a widow for eighteen months, she was only twenty-four,

and although this adventure may seem daring to the reader, it was the first time in her life that she had committed such an indiscretion ; for it is certain that until now she had experienced love only for her husband. This adventure had troubled her so much that she had had to unite all her strength not to renounce it on the way : now her eyes eloquently expressed, at one and the same time, love, confusion, and courage.

Pippo regarded her with so much admiration that he could not speak. No matter under what circumstances one finds himself, it is impossible to see a perfectly beautiful woman without astonishment and respect. Pippo had often met Beatrice on his walks and at certain social reunions. He had heard her beauty eulogized a hundred times, and had done so himself. She was the daughter of Pietro Loredano, a member of the Council of Ten, and great-granddaughter of the famous Loredano who took such an active part in the case of Giacomo Foscari. The pride of this family was only too well known in Venice, and Beatrice was considered to have inherited the pride of her ancestors. She had been married when very young to the procurator Marco Donato, whose death had left her free and in the possession of a vast fortune. The great lords of the republic aspired to her hand, but to the efforts they had made to please her she had responded only by the most disdainful indifference. In a word, her haughty and almost savage character, so to speak,

passed as a proverb. Pippo, then, was doubly surprised; for if, on the one side, he had never dared to suppose that his mysterious conquest was Beatrice Donato, on the other, it seemed to him, in looking at her, that he saw her for the first time—so different was she from herself. Love, which gives charms to the most ordinary faces, showed itself all-powerful in thus embellishing a masterpiece of nature.

After some moments of silence, Pippo approached his lady and took her hand. He tried to picture his surprise and thank her for his happiness; but she did not reply, or seem to hear him. She remained immobile and appeared to distinguish nothing, as if all her surroundings had been a dream. He spoke to her a long time before she made any movement; however, he had encircled Beatrice's waist with his arm, and he was seated near her.

“Yesterday you sent me a kiss upon a rose,” he said; “allow me to return what I received, upon a flower more beautiful and fresh.”

Thus speaking, he kissed her upon her lips. She made no effort to prevent him, but fixed her eyes, which had wandered indifferently, upon Pippo. She gently pushed him away, and, shaking her head sadly but gracefully, said:

“You do not love me, you have only a caprice for me; but I love you, and I wish at once to get on my knees before you.”

She did, in fact, bend before him. Pippo tried in vain to restrain her, and begged her to rise. She slipped between his arms, and knelt on the floor.

It is not usual nor even agreeable to see a woman take this humble posture. Although this is an expression of love, it seems to belong exclusively to the man. It is a painful attitude, which one cannot see without trouble and which has sometimes induced judges to pardon criminals. Pippo contemplated, with increasing surprise, the beautiful picture which presented itself to him. If he had been seized with delight on recognizing Beatrice, what must have been his feelings on seeing her at his feet? The widow of Donato, the daughter of the Loredanos, was on her knees. Her velvet robe, strewn with silver flowers, covered the slabs; her veil and flowing hair touched the ground. Her beautiful white shoulders were visible, her hands joined, her humid eyes were raised to Pippo. Moved to the depths of his heart, he recoiled a few steps, drunken with pride. He did not belong to the nobility, and the patrician pride which Beatrice threw aside, passed like lightning through the young man's being.

But this lightning lasted only for an instant, and rapidly disappeared. Such a spectacle ought to produce more than a feeling of vanity. When we lean over a limpid stream, our image is soon painted there and our approach calls into being a brother who appears before us at the bottom of the water. Thus in the human

soul, love calls love, and it is brought to life by a look. Pippo also threw himself on his knees. Thus kneeling, the one before the other, they remained some moments exchanging their first kisses.

If Beatrice was a daughter of the Loredanos, the gentle blood of her mother, Bianca Contarini, ran in her veins. Never had there existed a better creature than this mother, who was also one of the beauties of Venice. Always happy and hopeful, thinking only to live well during peace and a lover of her country during war, Bianca seemed like an elder sister to her daughters. She died young, and was beautiful even in death.

It was through her that Beatrice had learned to understand and love art, especially painting. It was not that the young widow had become very learned upon the subject. She had been to Rome and Florence, and the masterpieces of Michael Angelo had only inspired her with interest. Had she been a Roman, she would have only loved Raphael; but she was a daughter of the Adriatic, and she preferred Titian. While every one about her was occupied with the court intrigues or the affairs of the republic, she only interested herself in the new pictures and what was to become of her favorite art after the death of the aged Vecellio. She had seen at the Dolfino palace the picture of which I spoke in the beginning of this story, the only one which Tizianello had painted, and which perished in the flames. After having admired that

canvas, she had met Pippo at the Signora Dorotea's house, and had fallen madly in love with him.

Painting at the time of Julius II. and Leo X. was not the trade it is to-day. It was a religion for the artists, a brilliant taste for the great lords, a glory for Italy and a passion for women. When a pope left the Vatican to pay a visit to Buonarotti, the daughter of a noble Venetian could without shame love a Tizianello; but Beatrice had a project which elevated and emboldened her passion. She wished to make of Pippo more than her lover, she wished to make him a great painter. She knew the irregular life he led, and she had resolved to turn him from it. She knew, that in spite of his irregularities, the sacred fire was not extinct in him, but only covered with ashes, and she hoped to reanimate the divine spark with her love. She had hesitated an entire year, caressing the idea in secret, meeting Pippo from time to time and looking at his windows when she passed upon the quay. She had been led on by a caprice, and could not resist the temptation to embroider the purse and send it to him. She had promised herself, it is true, to go no farther, and not to be tempted more; but when the Signora Dorotea had shown her the verses which Pippo had made for her, she had shed tears of joy. She was not ignorant of the risk that she ran in trying to realize her dream; but it was a woman's dream, and she told herself as she left her home: What woman wishes, God wills.

Led on and sustained by this thought, by her love, and by her sincerity, she felt sheltered from fear. Kneeling before Pippo, she had just made her first prayer to love ; but after the sacrifice of her pride, the impatient god demanded another. She no more hesitated to become the mistress of Tizianello than to become his wife. She took off her veil, and placed it upon a statue of Venus which was in the room ; then, as beautiful and pale as the marble goddess, she abandoned herself to her destiny.

She passed the day with Pippo as had been arranged. At sunset, the gondola which had brought her came for her, and she went out as secretly as she had entered. The servants had been sent off on different pretexts, and only the gatekeeper remained in the house. Used to the manner of life of his master, he was not surprised to see a masked woman cross the gallery with Pippo. But when he saw the lady, near the door, lift the frill of her mask and give Pippo a farewell kiss, he approached on tiptoe and listened.

“Have you never remarked me?” asked Beatrice gaily.

“Yes,” replied Pippo, “but I did not know your face well ; surely you can never doubt your beauty.”

“Nor you. You are as beautiful as the day, a thousand times more so than I thought. Are you going to love me?”

“Yes, and forever.”

“And I—always.”

With these words they separated, and Pippo remained upon the step of the door, following with his eyes the gondola which took Beatrice Donato away from him.

VI

Fifteen days went by, and Beatrice had not yet spoken of the project which she had in mind. To tell the truth, she had almost forgotten it herself. The first days of an *amorous liaison* resemble the executions of the Spanish when they discovered a new world. In setting out, they promised their government to follow precise instructions, to report their plans, and to civilize America ; but hardly have they arrived when the aspect of an unknown sky, a virginal forest, a mine of gold or silver, destroys their recollection. They forget their promises to all Europe, to run after what is new, but they have discovered a treasure. This is sometimes the way with lovers.

Still another motive excused Beatrice. For fifteen days Pippo had not gambled, and had been only once to the Countess Orsini's. This was a commencement of reform ; at least, Beatrice thought so, and I do not know whether she was right or wrong. Pippo passed half of the day with his mistress, and the other half gazing at the sea and drinking the wine of Samos in a wine-shop on the Lido. His friends saw him no more. He had broken all his habits, and troubled himself neither about the times nor the hour nor his actions. In a word, he was drunk with profound forgetfulness

of everything except the impression which the first kisses of a beautiful woman always leave after them. Can one say in such a case whether a man is wise or foolish?

To make use of an expression which says it all, Pippo and Beatrice were made for one another. They perceived this the first day, but time was necessary to entirely convince them of it, and for that a month was not too much. A month passed, then, without there being any question of painting. On the other hand, there was much question of love, of music on the water, and promenades out of the city. Great ladies sometimes like a clandestine pleasure-party in a restaurant in the suburbs better than a little supper in a boudoir. Beatrice was of this opinion, and she preferred a fresh fish eaten in company with Pippo under the Quintavalle arbors to even a doge's dinner. After the repast, they would row in their gondola around the Armenians' isle; and there, between the city and the Lido, between heaven and sea, I would advise the reader to go on a moonlight night to make love to a daughter of Venice.

At the end of the month, when Beatrice had come secretly one day to see Pippo, she found him more joyous than usual. When she entered, he had just finished breakfast, and was walking up and down singing. The sunlight streamed into the room, and brilliantly illuminated a silver dish full of gold pieces on the table. He had played the night before, and gained

fifteen hundred piastres from Vespasiano. With this sum he had bought a Chinese fan, some perfumed gloves, and a gold chain made in Venice and beautifully worked ; he had put them all in a cedar chest incrusted with mother-of-pearl, which he offered to Beatrice.

At first she received the present with joy, but as soon as she learned that the money had been gained at play, she did not wish to accept it. Instead of joining in Pippo's gaiety, she fell into a reverie. Perhaps he had already less love for her, she thought, since he had returned to his former pleasures. However this might be, she saw that the moment had come to speak and to try to make him renounce the dissipation to which he had returned.

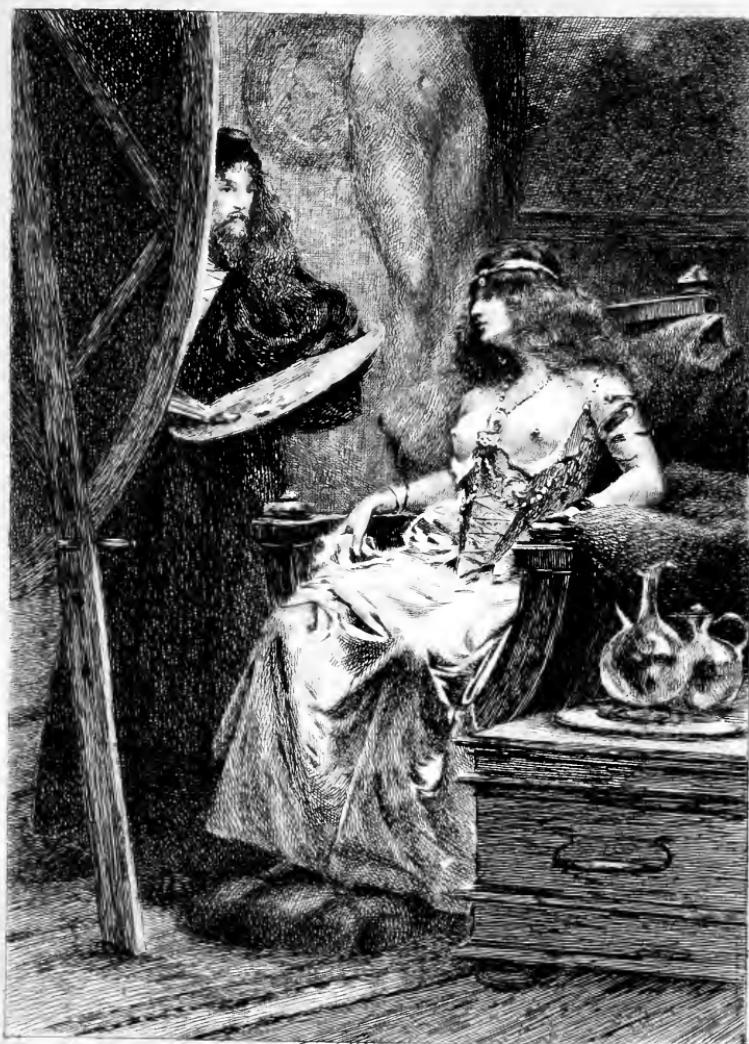
It was no easy undertaking. In a month she had been able to understand Pippo's character. He was extremely indifferent to the ordinary things of life, and he exercised the *far niente* delightfully, but for more important things it was not easy to manage him on account of this very indulgence ; for when persons wished to have control over him, instead of disputing and denying, he allowed them to speak their minds, but had his own way none the less. At last, in order to arrive at her point, Beatrice asked him if he would paint her portrait.

He consented at once. The next day he bought a canvas, and had a beautiful carved-oak easel which had belonged to his father, brought into his room. Beatrice came in the morning, covered with an ample brown

The Son of Titian Chapter VI

*Beatrice came in the morning, covered with an ample brown robe, which she threw aside when Pippo was ready to go to work. * * * Her hair, tied back from her brow and intermingled with pearls, fell over her arms and shoulders in long, undulating tresses. A necklace of pearls which reached to the waist, fastened in the centre by a golden clasp, indicated the perfect lines of her nude bosom.*







robe, which she threw aside when Pippo was ready to go to work. She then appeared before him in a costume a little like that in which Paris Bordone has clothed his *Crowned Venus*. Her hair, tied back from her brow and intermingled with pearls, fell over her arms and shoulders in long undulating tresses. A necklace of pearls which reached to the waist, fastened in the centre by a golden clasp, indicated the perfect lines of her nude bosom. Her robe of changeable taffeta, blue and rose color, was caught up on the knee with a clasp of rubies, showing a leg as smooth as marble. She wore rich bracelets, and scarlet velvet slippers laced with gold.

The *Venus* of Bordone, they say, is only the portrait of a Venetian lady; and this painter, pupil of Titian, had a great reputation in Italy. But Beatrice, who probably knew the model of the picture, knew also that she was more beautiful. She wished to incite Pippo to emulate him, and she thus showed him that he could surpass Bordone. "By the blood of Diana!" cried the young man when he had examined her for some time, "the *Crowned Venus* was only an oyster-woman of the Arsenal, who is disguised as a goddess; but here is the mother of Love, and the mistress of the god of battle."

It is easy to imagine that his first care, on seeing his beautiful model, was not to begin to paint. Beatrice feared for an instant that she was too beautiful, and that she had taken a poor means of succeeding in her

project of reform. However, the portrait was commenced, but it was sketched in with an unsteady hand. Pippo by chance let the brush fall from his hand, and Beatrice picked it up for him, and, in returning it to her lover, she said: "Your father's brush fell from his hand one day, and Charles V. picked it up for him. I wish to follow the example of Cæsar, although I am not an empress."

Pippo had always had a great affection and an unbounded admiration for his father, and he never spoke of him except with respect. This memory impressed him. He got up and opened a drawer: "Here is the brush of which you speak," he said, showing it to Beatrice; "my poor father kept it as a relic since the master of half the world had touched it."

"Do you remember that scene?" asked Beatrice, "and can you relate it to me?"

"It was at Bologna," replied Pippo. "There had been an interview between the Pope and the Emperor. He was troubled about the duchy of Florence, or, rather, the fate of Italy. The Pope and Charles V. had been seen talking together on the terrace; and the whole city kept silent during that interview. At the end of an hour all was decided; a great noise of men and horses had succeeded to the silence. They did not know what was going to happen, and every one tried to find out; but the most profound secrecy had been maintained. The inhabitants, with curiosity and terror,

watched the movements of the inferior officers of the two courts. They spoke of a dismemberment of Italy, of exiles and of new principalities. My father was working on a large picture, and was up on a high ladder which he used in painting, when the halberdiers, their pikes in their hands, opened the door, and arranged themselves against the wall. A page entered, and cried in a loud voice: ‘Cæsar!’ Some minutes after, the emperor appeared, inflexible in his doublet and smiling in his red beard. My father, surprised and charmed by this unexpected visit, came down from his ladder as quickly as he could. He was old, and, in holding on to the rungs, he let his brush fall. Everybody remained immovable: for, in the presence of the emperor, we had all changed into statues. My father was confused by his slowness and awkwardness; but he feared, in hurrying, that he might fall; Charles V. took a few steps forward, and, bending slowly, picked up the brush. ‘Titian,’ he said, in a clear and imperious voice, ‘well merits being served by Cæsar.’ And with an indescribable majesty he presented the brush to my father, who got on his knees to receive it.”

After this recital, which Pippo had not made without emotion, Beatrice remained silent for some time; she hung down her head, and appeared so absorbed that he asked her what she was thinking about.

“This is one of my thoughts,” she replied. “Charles V. is now dead, and his son is King of Spain. What

would people say if, instead of carrying his father's sword, Philip II. had left it to rust in a drawer?"

Pippo smiled, and whether he had understood Beatrice's thought or not, he asked her what she meant by it.

"I mean," she said, "that you also are the heir of a king, for Bordone, Moretto, and Romanino are good painters; Tintoretto and Giorgione were artists; but Titian was a king; and now, who holds his sceptre?"

"My brother Orazio would have been a great painter if he had lived," replied Pippo.

"Without doubt," replied Beatrice, "and this is what people will say of the sons of Titian: 'One would have been great if he had lived, and the other if he had willed.' "

"Do you believe that?" said Pippo, laughing; "ah, well! then let them add that he preferred to go about in a gondola with Beatrice Donato."

As this was not the response which Beatrice had expected, she was a little disconcerted. She, however, did not lose courage, but took a more serious tone.

"Listen to me," she said, "and do not jest. The only picture you ever painted was admired. There was no one who did not regret the loss; but the life you lead is something worse than the burning of the Dolfino palace, for you consume yourself. You think only of amusing yourself, and you do not reflect that what is a

mild dissipation for others, is a shame for you. The son of a rich merchant might throw dice, but not a Tizianello. To what good is it that you know more than our old painters, and that you have the youth which they lack? You have only to try in order to succeed, and you do not try. Your friends deceive you, but I fulfil my duty in telling you that you outrage the memory of your father; and who should tell you, if not I? As long as you are rich, you will find people to help you to ruin yourself; as long as you are handsome, women will love you; but what will become of you if, while you are young, no one tells you the truth? I am your mistress, my dear lord, but I also wish to be your lover. Would to God that you had been born poor! If you love me, you must work. I have found in a far-away quarter of the city a little secluded house, all on one floor. If you like, we will furnish it to our taste, and we will have two keys, one for you, and I will keep the other. There we shall fear no one, and we shall be at liberty. You will have your easel taken there, and if you will promise me to go there to work only two hours a day, I will go there to see you every day. Have you patience enough for that? If you accept, in a year from now you will not probably love me more, but you will have taken the habit of work, and there will be one more great name in Italy. If you refuse, I cannot cease to love you, but it will be telling me that you do not love me."

While Beatrice was speaking, she trembled. She feared to offend her lover; however, she had determined to express herself without reserve; this fear, and the desire to please, made her eyes glisten. She no longer resembled Venus, but a Muse. Pippo did not reply immediately. She seemed so beautiful to him thus that he left her some time in uncertainty. To tell the truth, he had listened less to her remonstrances than to the accent of her voice in pronouncing them, but this penetrating voice had charmed him. Beatrice had spoken from the depths of her heart, in the purest Tuscan with the Venetian sweetness. When a beautiful *arietta* comes from a charming mouth, we do not pay great attention to the words; it is even more agreeable sometimes not to hear them distinctly, and to allow ourselves to be carried on by the music alone. This was what Pippo had done. Without thinking what had been demanded of him, he went to Beatrice, kissed her on the forehead, and said:

“Anything you wish; you are as beautiful as an angel.”

It was agreed that from that day Pippo was to work regularly. Beatrice wished it put into writing. She drew out her memorandum-book, and traced there several lines with loving pride.

“You know,” she said, “that we Loredanos hold ourselves to faithful accounts.² I inscribe you as my debtor for two hours’ work per day for one year; sign, and pay me exactly, that I may know that you love me.”

Pippo signed with good grace: "But it is well understood that I commence by making your portrait."

Beatrice kissed him in her turn now, and said in his ear: "And I also will make your portrait, a beautiful, faithful portrait, not inanimate, but living."

VII

The love of Pippo and Beatrice might at first have been compared to a small spring which escapes from the ground; but now it resembled a stream which trickles little by little until it makes a bed in the gravel.

If Pippo had been of noble birth, he would certainly have married Beatrice, for the more they knew each other, the stronger grew their love; but although the Vecelli were a good family of Cador, in Friuli, such a union was not possible. Not only the near relatives of Beatrice would have been opposed to it, but all who carried a patrician name in Venice would have been outraged. Those who most willingly tolerated intrigues of love, and who found nothing to say about a noble lady being the mistress of a painter, could never have pardoned the same lady for marrying her lover. Such were the prejudices of that epoch, which, however, were as sensible as some of ours.

The little house was furnished, and Pippo kept his word in going there every day. To say that he worked

would be too much, but he made a pretence of it, or, rather, he believed that he worked. Beatrice, on her side, did more than she promised, for she always arrived there first. The portrait was sketched in. It advanced slowly, but it was upon the easel, and although for the greater part of the time it was not touched, it at least held the office of witness as encouraging love or excusing laziness.

Every morning Beatrice sent her lover a bouquet by her negress, that he might accustom himself to getting up early. "A painter ought to be up with the sun," she said; "the sunlight is his life and the true element of his art, since he can do nothing without it."

This idea seemed all right to Pippo, but he found the application of it difficult. He generally put the bouquet brought by the negress in a glass of sweetened water which he had on his night-table, and went to sleep again. When, in going to the little house, he passed under the windows of the Countess Orsini, it seemed to him that his money danced in his pockets. One day he met Vespasiano out walking, who asked why he never saw him now.

"I have taken an oath never to throw dice again or to touch a card; but, since you are here, let us toss up for just the money we have on us," said Pippo.

Vespasiano, who, although he was old and a notary, was no less than the gambler incarnate, did not refuse this proposition. He threw a piastre in the air, lost

thirty sequins, and went away far from satisfied.—“What a pity,” thought Pippo, “not to play at such a time! I am sure that Beatrice’s purse would continue to bring me good luck, and I should gain in one week what I have lost in two years.” It was, however, with great pleasure that he obeyed his mistress. His little studio presented the gayest and most peaceful aspect. It was like a new world, of which he, however, had a memory, for his canvas and his easel recalled his childhood. We accommodate ourselves easily to the things which were formerly familiar to us, and this facility, added to the association, renders them dear to us without knowing why. When Pippo took his palette on a beautiful morning and squeezed out of the tubes the brilliant colors on it; when he looked at them arranged in order and ready to be mixed with his hand, he seemed to hear behind him the rough voice of his father crying as formerly: “Come, Lazy-bones, what are you dreaming about? get to work bravely!” At this memory he turned his head; but instead of Titian’s serene face, he saw Beatrice, with arms and bosom nude, her forehead covered with pearls, who prepared to pose for him, and said smiling: “When you please, my lord.”

You must not believe that he was indifferent to the advice which she had given him, and of which she was not sparing. As soon as she had spoken to him of the Venetian masters, and the glorious place which they had achieved among the Italian schools; after having

recalled to him to what grandeur art had risen, she then showed him its decadence. She had only too much reason for this; for Venice was doing what Florence had just done. She lost not only her glory, but respect for her glory. Michael Angelo and Titian had each lived almost a century; after having instructed their country in art, they had struggled against the havoc as long as human force could last, but these two old columns had finally fallen. In order to elevate the obscure innovators to the skies, Venice forgot the masters almost before they were buried. Brescia and Cremona opened new schools, and proclaimed them superior to the old. Even in Venice, the son of one of Titian's pupils usurped the surname given to Pippo, and had himself called Tizianello, and filled the patriarchal church with work in the worst possible taste.

Pippo, who did not trouble himself about his country's shame, became irritated by this scandal. When any one praised a bad picture before him, or he found in some church a poor canvas in the midst of the masterpieces of his father, he experienced the same displeasure that a patrician might have felt in seeing the name of a bastard engraved upon the book of gold. Beatrice understood this displeasure, and women always have more or less the instincts of Delilah: they know when most appropriately to seize the secret from Samson's locks. While respecting the sacred names, Beatrice took care from time to time to eulogize some

modern painter. It was not easy for her thus to contradict herself, but she acted her part with so much ingenuity that she gave these false eulogies an air of genuineness. In this way she often excited Pippo's ill-humor, and she noticed at these times that he worked with extraordinary interest. He had then the courage of a master, and impatience inspired him. But his frivolous character soon returned, and he threw aside his brush, crying: "Let us go and drink a glass of Cyprus wine, and talk no more about those idiots."

Such an inconstant spirit would have discouraged any one except Beatrice. But since we find examples of the most tenacious hatreds in history, we must not be astonished that love also can give perseverance. Beatrice was firmly convinced of one thing,—that habit can do everything,—and her conviction came from this. She had seen her father, an extremely rich man and of very feeble health, given up in his old age to the greatest fatigue and the driest calculations in order to increase his immense fortune by a few sequins. She had often begged him to take care of himself, but he had always made the same reply: that it was a habit acquired in youth, which had become necessary for him, and that he would continue it while he lived. Led on by this example, Beatrice wished to prejudge nothing so long as Pippo should not be subjugated to regular work, and she thought that the love of glory was a noble ambition which ought to be as strong as avarice.

In thinking this, she was not mistaken ; but the difficulty was, that, in order to give Pippo a good habit, it would be necessary to uproot a bad one. Now, there are bad weeds which can be pulled up without much trouble, but gambling is not one of these ; perhaps it is the only passion which can resist love, for we have seen the ambitious, the libertines, and the devout yield to a woman's wish, but very rarely the gambler, and the reason is easy enough. In the same way that money represents almost all pleasures, play sums up almost all the emotions ; each card, each throw of the dice, means the loss or the gain of a certain number of pieces of gold or silver, and each of these pieces is the sign of an undetermined pleasure. He who gains then feels a multitude of desires, and not only does he enjoy them freely, but he seeks to create new ones, having the certainty of satisfying them. Imagine, then, the despair of him who loses, and who finds himself all at once unable to play after having handled enormous sums. Such experiences, often repeated, at once exhaust and depress the mind, producing a sort of vertigo, so that ordinary sensations are too weak, and present themselves too slowly and too regularly for the gambler to take any interest therein, accustomed as he is to concentrate his passions.

Happily for Pippo, his father had left him too rich for either his loss or gain to exercise a very baleful influence on him. Idleness rather than vice urged him on ;

besides, he was too young for the evil to be irremediable; even the inconstancy of his tastes proved that. It was not then impossible for him to reform, provided some one watched over him attentively. This necessity did not escape Beatrice, and without troubling herself about her own reputation, she spent nearly all her time with her lover. In order that habitude might not engender satiety, she brought into play all her resources of feminine coquetry; her headdress, her ornaments, even her language, varied without ceasing, and for fear that Pippo might weary of her, she changed her dress every day. Pippo saw all these little stratagems, but he was not so foolish as to get angry about it,—on the contrary, in fact, for on his side he did the same; he changed his humor as often as he changed his collar. But he had no need to study to do that, for nature had so made him, and he sometimes said, laughing: “A gudgeon is a little fish, and a caprice is a little passion.”

Living thus, and both loving pleasure, our lovers understood each other wonderfully. Only one thing troubled Beatrice. Every time she spoke to Pippo about their projects formed for the future, he was contented to reply: “Well, let us begin by making your portrait.”

“I ask nothing better,” she said, “and that has been decided for a long time. But what do you intend to do after that? This portrait cannot be exhibited in public, and when it is finished you must think of making yourself

known. Have you some subject in mind? Shall it be an ecclesiastical picture, or historical?"

When she addressed him these questions, he always found some means of preventing his hearing her, as, for instance, picking up his handkerchief or arranging a button on his coat, or some such trifle. She had commenced by believing that this was the mystery of the artist, and that he did not wish to give an account of his plans; but no one was less mysterious than he, nor even more confidential, at least with his mistress, for there is no love without confidence. "Could it be possible that he deceived me," thought Beatrice, "and that this complaisance is only pretence, and that he does not intend to keep his word?"

When this doubt came into her mind, she became grave and almost haughty. "I have your promise," she said; "you are engaged for a year, and we will see if you are a man of honor." But before she had finished this speech, Pippo embraced her tenderly, saying: "Let us commence by making your portrait." Then he spoke of other things.

You can imagine her impatience to see that portrait finished; and it was completed at the end of six weeks. When she posed for the last sitting, Beatrice was so overjoyed that she could not remain in her place: she came and went from the picture to her chair, exclaiming all the time with admiration and pleasure. Pippo worked slowly, and shook his head from time to time; all at

once he frowned, and passed the linen cloth which he used to wipe his brushes over the canvas. Beatrice ran toward him and found that he had wiped out the mouth and the eyes. She was so much shocked that she could not keep back the tears, but Pippo calmly put his colors back in the box. "The expression of the eyes and the smile," he said, "are two things difficult to render; I must be inspired to dare to paint them. My hand does not feel sure enough for that, and I do not know that it ever will."

The portrait then remained thus disfigured, and every time that Beatrice looked at that head without mouth or eyes, she felt her anxiety redouble.

VIII

The reader may have noticed that Pippo liked Greek wines. Now, although the wines of the Orient are not heady as a rule, after a good dinner Pippo willingly prattled at the dessert. Beatrice never failed to turn the conversation upon painting; but whenever it was in question, one of two things happened: either Pippo kept silent, with a certain smile which Beatrice did not like to see on his lips, or he spoke of art with indifference and a singular disdain. A curious thought returned to him often in these interviews.

He had, he said, a beautiful picture in mind; it represented the Campo-Vaccino in Rome at sunset,—the horizon vast, the place deserted. In the foreground are children playing upon the ruins, in the middle distance a young man enveloped in his cloak is seen passing; his face is pale, his delicate features altered by suffering; we have but to see him to divine that he is near death. With one hand he holds a palette and brushes, with the other he supports himself upon a robust young woman who turns her head, laughing. To explain this scene, we must put at the bottom the date of the day when it took place,—Good Friday of the year 1520.

Beatrice easily understood the meaning of this enigma. It was on Good Friday of the year 1520 that Raphael had died in Rome, and however much they had tried to give the lie to the report which had started, it was certain that this great man had expired in the arms of his mistress. The picture which Pippo proposed would represent Raphael a few moments before his end; and, in fact, such a scene, treated with simplicity by a real artist, might have been beautiful. But Beatrice knew what Pippo proposed to convey in this subject, and she read in the eyes of her lover what he gave her to understand by it.

While every one in Italy united in deplored this death, Pippo was accustomed to glory in it, and he often said that, in spite of all the genius of Raphael, his death was more beautiful than his life. This thought

was revolting to Beatrice, and yet she could not repress a smile; it was saying that love is worth more than fame, and if such an idea can be reprimanded by a woman, it cannot at least offend her. If Pippo had chosen another example, Beatrice would, perhaps, have been of his opinion: "But why," she said, "oppose two things which sympathize so well? Love and fame are brother and sister; why do you wish to separate them?"

"One never does two things well at the same time," added Pippo. "You would not advise a merchant to make verses at the same time that he adds up his accounts, or a poet to measure cloth while he seeks for a rhyme. Why, then, do you wish me to paint while I am in love?"

Beatrice did not know how to reply, for she did not dare to say that love was not an occupation.

"Do you, then, wish to die like Raphael?" she asked, "and if so, why do you not commence by doing like him?"

"It is, on the contrary," replied Pippo, "for fear of dying like Raphael that I do not wish to do like him. Either Raphael was wrong to fall in love, being a painter, or he was wrong to paint, being in love. That is why he died at thirty-seven years, in a glorious manner, it is true, but there is no good way to die. If he had made only fifty masterpieces less, it would have been a misfortune for the Pope, who would have been obliged to have his chapels decorated by another; but

the Fornarina would have had fifty kisses more, and Raphael would have avoided the odor of oil-colors, which is so injurious to health."

"Will you make a Fornarina of me, then," cried Beatrice; "if you neither take care of your fame nor of your life, will you accuse me of burying you early?"

"No, in truth," replied Pippo, carrying his glass to his lips; "if I could metamorphose you, I would make you a Staphylus."¹³

In spite of the light tone which Pippo affected in expressing himself thus, he was not jesting so much as one might believe. He concealed under these railleries a reasonable opinion, and this is what was at the bottom of his thought.

We often speak, in the history of the arts, of the facility with which great painters execute their work, and cite instances of dissipation and even laziness going with worth. There is no greater mistake than this. It is not impossible for a well-trained painter, sure of his hand and his reputation, to succeed in making a beautiful study in the midst of distractions and pleasures. Da Vinci painted sometimes, they say, holding his lyre in one hand and his brush in the other; but the celebrated portrait of Joconda remained four years on his easel. In spite of rare instances which are too much praised, it is certain that that which is really beautiful is the work of time and study, and that there is no real genius without patience.

Pippo was convinced of this rule, and the example of his father confirmed him in his opinion. In fact, there never existed a painter, perhaps, more painstaking than Titian, unless it was his pupil Rubens; but if Titian's hand was quick, his thought was patient. During the ninety-nine years that he lived, he constantly occupied himself with his art. At first, he had commenced to paint with a minute timidity and a dryness which made his works resemble the Gothic pictures of Albert Dürer. It was only after long work that he dared to obey his genius and allow his brush freedom, which he sometimes repented of, as it happened that Michael Angelo said, in seeing a canvas by Titian, that it was a pity that they neglected the principles of drawing in Venice.

Now, at the moment of which I speak, a deplorable facility which is always the forerunner of decadence in art reigned in Venice. Pippo, sustained by the name he bore, with a little audacity and the study he had made, could easily and quickly have become illustrious; but it was exactly that which he did not wish. He would have regarded it as shameful to profit by the ignorance of the public; he said, with truth, that the son of an architect had no right to pull down the building of his father, and that if the son of a Titian became a painter, it was his duty to oppose himself to the decadence of art.

But to undertake such a task it would be necessary, without doubt, for him to consecrate his entire life to it. Would he succeed? That was uncertain. A single

man has very little strength when the age works against him ; he is carried on by the multitude as a swimmer in a whirlpool. What would happen to him, then ? Pippo was not blind to his shortcomings, he foresaw that courage would fail him sooner or later, and that his old pleasures would draw him away again. He ran the chance, then, of making a useless sacrifice, be the sacrifice entire or incomplete ; and what fruit would he gather from it ? He was young, rich, in good health, and he had a beautiful mistress. In order to live happily, he had only to let the sun rise and set ; and after all, who had the right to reproach him ? Ought he to renounce so much good for a doubtful glory which probably would escape him ?

It was after having ripely reflected on it that Pippo had commenced to affect an indifference which little by little became natural. "If I study twenty years still," he said, "and if I try to imitate my father, I shall sing to the deaf ; and if strength fail me, I shall dishonor my name." And with his habitual gaiety he concluded by crying : "Let painting go to the devil ! life is too short."

While he disputed with Beatrice, the portrait remained always unfinished. One day Pippo went by chance into the convent of the Servites. Upon an elevated scaffolding in the chapel, he saw the son of Marco Vecellio, he who I have told you called himself Tizianello. The young man could have taken this name for no other reason than to pass as a distant relation of Titian, and

he called himself by his baptismal name,—Tito,—from which he had made Titian, and from Titian, Tizianello, intending that all Venice should believe him to have inherited the genius of the great painter, and stand in ecstasy before his frescoes. Pippo had never troubled himself about this ridiculous fraud; but now, whether it was because it was disagreeable for him to come face to face with this person, or that he thought more seriously of his own value than formerly, he approached the scaffolding, which was supported on small pieces of timber badly attached, and gave it a kick. One of the timbers fell; happily, the scaffolding did not fall at the same time, but it swayed so much that the so-called Tizianello reeled as if he were drunk, then lost his equilibrium in the midst of his colors, with which he was daubed in the funniest way.

You can imagine the rage he was in when he got up. He descended the scaffolding, and advanced on Pippo, abusing him. A priest threw himself between them to separate them just as they were drawing their swords in the holy place. The devotees fled terrified, making the sign of the cross, while the curious pressed nearer. Tito cried, in a loud voice, that a man had tried to assassinate him, and demanded justice for this crime, as the timbers bore witness to it. The bystanders commenced to murmur, and one of them, more courageous than the others, tried to seize Pippo by the collar. Pippo, who had only acted heedlessly, and who regarded this scene

laughingly, seeing himself on the point of being led to prison and treated as an assassin, became enraged in his turn. After having rudely pushed away the man who tried to stop him, he threw himself upon Tito.

"It is you," he cried, seizing him, "who ought to be led by the collar to the Place Saint-Marc, and there hung up as a robber. Do you know to whom you speak, stealer of names? My name is Pomponio Vecellio, son of Titian. Just now I gave a kick to your worm-eaten stage; but if my father had been in my place, be sure that to teach you to call yourself Tizianello, he would have shaken your tree so well that you would have fallen like a rotten apple. But that is not all. To treat you as you deserve, he would have taken you by the ear, insolent scholar, and led you back to the studio from which you escaped without knowing how to draw a head. By what right do you soil the walls of this convent, and sign your miserable frescoes with my name? Go away and learn anatomy, and study from nature for ten years, as I have done with my father, and we will then see who you are and if you have a signature. But until then I advise you not to take that which belongs to me, or I will throw you into the canal and baptize you once for all."

With these words, Pippo went out of the church. When the people had heard his name, they became calm. They stood back to open a passage for him, then followed him with curiosity. He went at once to the

little house, where he found Beatrice awaiting him. Without taking time to relate his adventure, he took his palette, and, still moved by anger, he commenced to work on the portrait.

In less than an hour it was finished. At the same time he made great changes in it; at first he painted out several too minute details, he arranged the draperies more freely, retouched the background and the accessories, which are so important a part of a Venetian painting. He then came to the eyes and the mouth, and he succeeded in a few touches of the brush in giving them a perfect expression. The eyes were sweet and proud; the lips, upon which appeared a light down, were half open; the teeth shone like pearls, and speech seemed ready to come forth.

“I will not call you *Venus Crowned*,” he said, when all was finished, “but *Venus in Love*.”

You can imagine Beatrice’s joy; while Pippo worked, she hardly dared to breathe; she kissed him and thanked him a thousand times, and told him that in future she would not call him Tizianello, but Titian. During the rest of the day, she spoke only of the numberless beauties which she discovered anew each instant in her portrait. Not only did she regret that it could not be exhibited, but she was near asking that it should be. They passed the evening at the Quintavalle, and never had the two lovers been happier or gayer. Pippo showed the joy of a child, and it was only as late as possible,

and after a thousand protestations of love, that Beatrice decided to separate herself from him for several hours.

She did not sleep that night ; the most brilliant projects and the sweetest hopes agitated her. She already saw her dreams realized, her lover praised and envied by all Italy, and a new glory for Venice in him. The next day, as usual, she was first at the rendezvous, and while awaiting Pippo, she looked at her dear portrait. The background of this portrait was a landscape, in the foreground was a rock. On this rock, Beatrice saw several lines traced in vermillion. She leaned over with anxiety to read them. In fine Gothic characters, she read the following sonnet :

Beatrice Donato is the name divinely sweet,
Of her whose human shape celestial grace outlined ;
A constant heart within her snowy bosom beat,
Her stainless form a spotless, gracious mind enshrined.

So Titian's son, that ages should her name repeat,
This portrait limned, mute witness of their souls entwined ;
Then threw his brush away, his master hand declined
Another's grace to paint ; with hers his task complete.

O passer-by, if how to love thy heart dare know,
Ere thou condemn my act, behold my mistress, go
And say, if thou perchance, so fair a one dost greet.

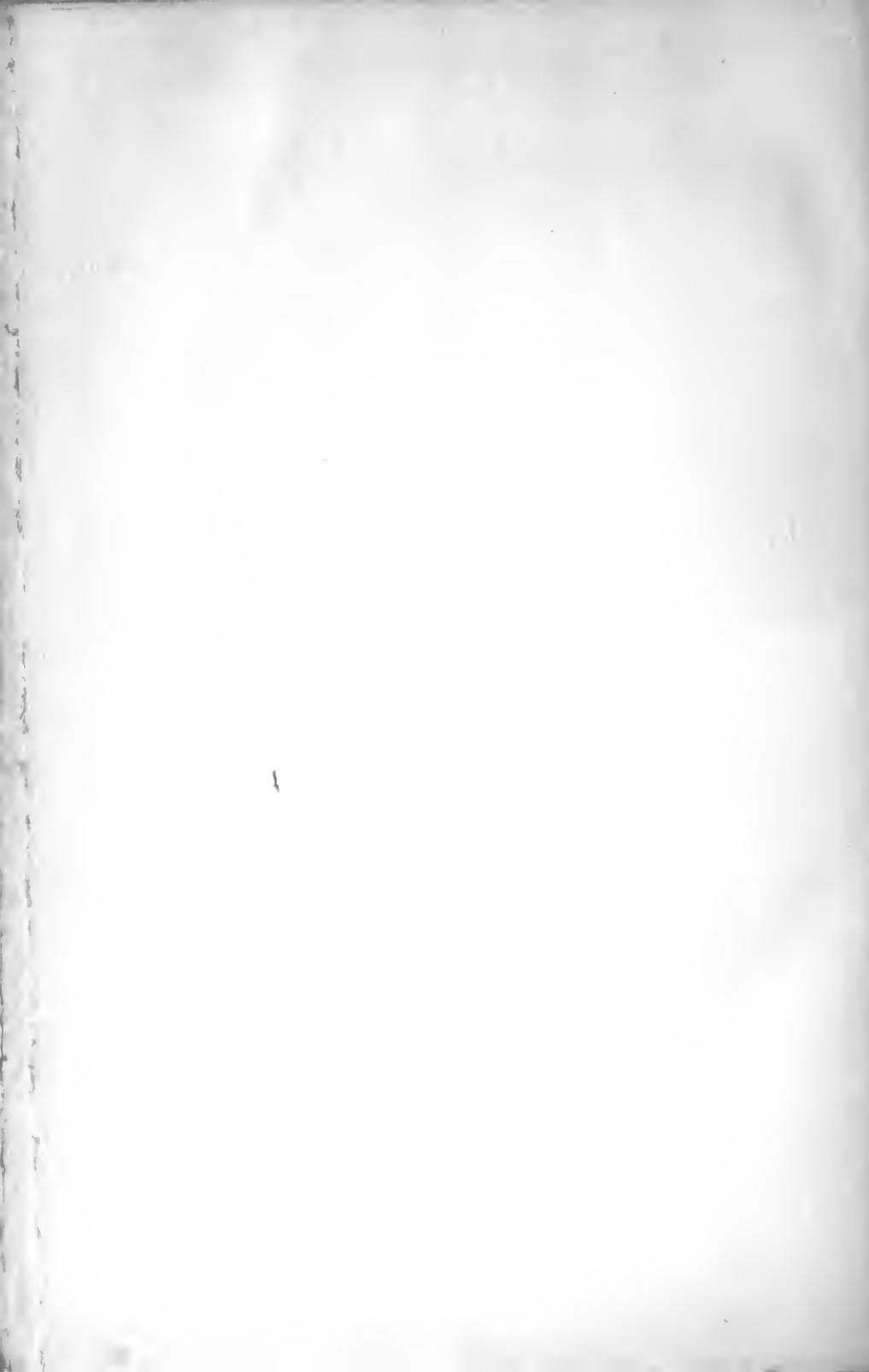
Consider, then, how light is glory here on earth,
Since, glorious as this portrait is, it is not worth
One kiss from the model, believe me, I entreat !

Whatever effort Beatrice made after that, she could never persuade her lover to work again ; he was inflexible to all her prayers, and when she pressed him too much, he recited his sonnet to her. He remained, then, until death, faithful to his idleness ; and Beatrice, they say, was faithful to her love. They lived a long time as a wedded pair, and it is to be regretted that the pride of the Loredanos, hurt by this public *liaison*, destroyed the portrait of Beatrice, as chance had destroyed the first picture of Tizianello.⁴



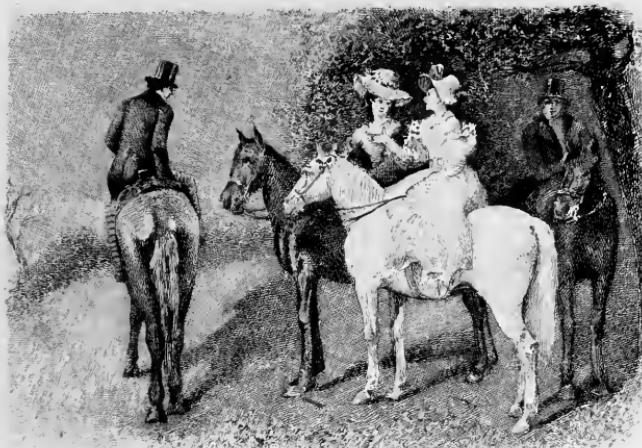
FRÉDÉRIC AND BERNERETTE

1838









Lucas sc

I

Toward the last years of the Restoration, a young man from Besançon named Frédéric Hombert came to Paris to study law. His family was not rich and could give him only a moderate allowance, but as he lived a well-regulated life, a very little sufficed for him. He lived in the Latin quarter in order to be within reach of his lectures, and his tastes and disposition were so sedentary that he rarely visited the boulevards, the squares, and the public buildings which are objects of curiosity to strangers in Paris.

The society of some young men with whom he soon had the opportunity to become intimate at the law-school, and some houses which his letters of introduction opened for him, were his only distractions. He kept up a regular correspondence with his parents, and told them of the success of his examinations as he took them.

After having worked assiduously for three years, he at last saw the moment arrive when he was to be received at the bar. It only remained for him to write his thesis, and he had already fixed the date of his return to Besançon, when an unexpected circumstance occurred which disturbed his tranquil life for some time.

He lived in the Rue de la Harpe, on the third floor, and had some flowers on his window-ledge which he took care of. One morning, as he was watering them, he noticed at the opposite window a young girl who at once began to laugh. She looked at him with such a gay and frank air, that he could not refrain from nodding to her. She returned his salutation with a pleasing grace, and from this moment it became their habit every day to wish each other good-morning from one side of the street to the other. One day, when Frédéric had risen at an earlier hour than was his custom, after having bowed to his fair neighbor, he took a sheet of paper, folded it in the form of a letter, and showed it to the young girl from the distance, as if to ask her if he could write to her; but she shook her head as a sign of refusal, and retired, seeming to be angry.

The next day it so happened that they met by chance in the street. The young woman was entering her house accompanied by a young man whom Frédéric did not know, and whom he did not recollect even to have seen among the students. Although she wore a bonnet, Frédéric judged, by the appearance and toilet of his neighbor, that she was what is called in Paris a grisette. Her companion, judging by his age, was, without a doubt, a brother or a lover, and seemed to be a lover rather than a brother. However it might be, Frédéric resolved to think no more of the adventure. When the first frost came, he took away the flowers from the place where they had stood upon the window; but, in spite of himself, from time to time he looked across the way. He drew the desk upon which he worked, to the window, and arranged his curtain so that he was able to watch without being noticed.

His neighbor, on her side, no longer showed herself in the morning. She appeared sometimes at five o'clock in the evening to close her shutters after having lighted her lamp. Frédéric ventured one day to throw her a kiss. He was surprised to see that she returned it as gaily as she had his first salutation. Again he took the piece of paper, which had remained folded on his table, and, expressing himself as well as he could by signs, he asked if she would write to him or if she would receive his note. But her reply was no more favorable than the first time; the girl still shook her head, and

continued to do so, when he saw her, for a week. The kisses were most welcome; but as to letters, he must give them up. At the end of a week, Frédéric, being vexed at always receiving the same refusal, tore up the paper before her face. At first she laughed, remained for some time undecided, then drew from the pocket of her apron a note which she showed, in her turn, to the student. You may well suppose that he did not shake his head. Not being able to speak, he wrote, in big letters upon a large sheet of drawing-paper, these three words: "I adore you!" Then he put the paper upon a chair and placed a lighted candle at each side. The pretty girl, by the aid of an opera-glass, could thus read the first declaration of her lover. She replied to it with a smile, and made a sign to Frédéric to come down and get the note which she had shown him.

It was dark, and there was a heavy fog. The young man descended quickly, crossed the street, and entered his neighbor's house; the door was open, and the girl stood at the foot of the stairs. Frédéric, putting his arm around her, was more ready to embrace her than to speak to her. She ran away trembling.

"What have you written to me?" he asked; "when and how can I see you again?"

She stopped, retraced her steps, and, slipping her note into Frédéric's hand, she said:

"Wait, and do not sleep away from home any more."

Frédéric and Bénerette Chapter E

Not being able to speak, he wrote, in big letters upon a sheet of drawing-paper, these three words: "I adore you!" Then he put the paper upon a chair and placed a lighted candle at each side. The pretty girl, by the aid of an opera-glass, could thus read the first declaration of her lover. She replied to it with a smile, and made a sign to Frédéric to come down and get the note she had shown him.







It had happened, in short, that the student, in spite of his prudence, had latterly spent the night away from home and the girl had noticed it.

When two lovers are in harmony, the obstacles are indeed very little things to overcome. The note just given to Frédéric announced that the greatest precautions must be taken, spoke of dangers which threatened, and asked where it would be necessary for the lovers to go to see each other. It could not be, the girl said, in the young man's apartment, and he must find a room in the neighborhood. There is no lack of them in the Latin quarter. The first meeting had been arranged when Frédéric received the following letter:

“ You tell me that you adore me, but you do not say whether you think me pretty. You have hardly seen me, and to be able to love me you must have a better look at me. I am going out with my servant; please come out also, and meet me in the street. Recognize me as an acquaintance, say a few words to me, and look at me well during the time. If you do not find me pretty, tell me so and I will not be angry. That will be best; and, besides, I am not ill-natured.

“A thousand kisses.

“ BERNERETTE.”

Frédéric obeyed his mistress's orders, and I have only to add that the test was not dubious. Yet Bernerette, through the refinement of coquetry, instead of arranging

herself in fine attire for this meeting, presented herself in morning-dress, with her hair tucked up under her bonnet. The student made her a respectful salutation, repeated to her that he found her more beautiful than ever, then re-entered his house, delighted with his new conquest. But she seemed to him still more beautiful the following day, when she came to keep the appointment with him, and he saw that she could not only do without finery, but even all kinds of toilet, even the most simple.

II

Frédéric and Bernerette gave themselves up to their love almost before having exchanged a single word, and they were already using *thee* and *thou* to each other from the first words which they uttered. With their arms around each other, they seated themselves near the fireplace, where a good fire was crackling. There Bernerette, supported upon her lover's knees, her cheeks brilliant with the beautiful colors of pleasure, told him who she was. She had acted in comedy in the provinces ; she was called Louise Durand, and Bernerette was her stage name ; she had lived for two years with a young man whom she no longer loved. She desired,

at any cost, to get rid of him and to change her style of life, either by going on to the stage again, if she could find patronage, or by learning a trade. More than that, she made no explanation concerning her family nor her past. She announced only her resolution to break the ties which were insupportable to her. Frédéric did not wish to deceive her, and explained to her sincerely the position in which he found himself; not being rich, and knowing few persons, he could give her very slight assistance indeed.

“As I am not able to undertake the charge of you myself,” he added, “I do not wish, under any pretext, to become the cause of a rupture; but as it would seem to me too cruel to share you with another, I will go away, with deepest regret, guarding in my heart the remembrance of a happy day.”

At this unexpected declaration, Bernerette began to cry. “Why go away?” she said. “If I quarrel with my lover, you will not be the cause of it, as I have determined to do so for a long time. If I go to work as an apprentice for a sempstress, will you love me no longer? It is too bad that you are not rich; but what can you do? We will do the best we can.”

Frédéric was going to reply, but a kiss imposed silence upon him. “Do not let us talk more about it or think any more of it,” said Bernerette. “When you wish me, make me a sign from your window, and do not worry yourself about the rest, which does not concern you.”

For about six weeks, Frédéric hardly worked at all. His thesis, which he had begun, lay upon his table, and he added a line from time to time. He knew that if the desire to amuse himself came to him, he had only to open his window. Bernerette was always ready, and when he asked her how she had so much liberty, she always replied to him that that did not concern him. He had saved a little money which he expended rapidly. At the end of a fortnight, he was obliged to have recourse to a friend, to give a supper to his mistress.

When this friend, who was named Gérard, learned Frédéric's new style of life, he said: "Take care of yourself, you are in love. The girl has nothing, and you have not much; in your place I should beware of a provincial comedienne; such passions lead much further than one thinks."

Frédéric replied, with a laugh, that it was not a question of a passion, but of a passing love-affair. He told Gérard how he had made the acquaintance of Bernerette from his window. "She is a girl who thinks only of laughing," he said to his friend; "there is nothing less dangerous than she, and nothing less serious than our acquaintance."

Gérard yielded to his reasoning, yet urged him to work. The latter assured him that his thesis would soon be finished, and in order not to have told a falsehood, he seated himself for several hours to do his work; but that same evening Bernerette expected him. They

went together to *La Chaumière*, and the work was put aside.

La Chaumière is the Tivoli of the Latin quarter, the meeting-place of students and grisettes. It necessarily follows that this is a centre of gaiety and the resort of merry companions, who drink beer and dance there. A frank gaiety, sometimes a little noisy, animates the assembly. There the belles wear round caps, and the "fashionables" velvet vests; they smoke, they drink, they make love out-of-doors. Even if the police forbade the entrance to this garden to the creatures whom they register, it would still be only there perhaps that there could be found in Paris that old student life, so free and joyous, the traditions of which are vanishing day by day.

Frédéric, being a provincial, was not the man to find fault with the people whom he met there; and Bernerette, who wished only to amuse herself, would not have called his attention to it. A certain familiarity with the world is necessary to know where it is permissible to amuse one's self. Our happy couple did not reason about their pleasures; when they had danced all the evening, they went home tired and contented.

Frédéric was such a novice, that his first youthful follies seemed to him to be happiness itself. When Bernerette, leaning on his arm, skipped while walking on the Boulevard Neuf, he did not imagine anything more charming than to live thus from day to day.

They asked each other, from time to time, how their affairs stood, but neither of them answered this question clearly. The little furnished room, situated near the Luxembourg, was paid for for two months ; that was the important thing. Sometimes, upon arriving there, Bernerette had under her arm a meat-pie wrapped in paper, and Frédéric a bottle of good wine. They sat down to table then ; the young girl sang at dessert the verses of the farces which she had played ; if she had forgotten the words, the student improvised, to replace them, verses in praise of his lover, and, when he did not find the rhyme, a kiss took its place. Thus they passed the night alone together, without suspecting how time flew.

“ You are not working any more,” said Gérard, “ and your passing love-affair will last longer than a passion. Take care of yourself, you are spending money, and you are neglecting the means which you have of earning it.”

“ Reassure yourself,” answered Frédéric ; “ my thesis progresses, and Bernerette is going to enter as an apprentice with a sempstress. Let me enjoy in peace a moment of happiness, and do not worry yourself about the future.”

However, the time was approaching when it was necessary to print the thesis. It was finished in haste, and was none the worse for that. Frédéric was admitted to the bar ; he sent to Besançon several copies

of his dissertation, accompanied by his diploma. His father replied to this happy news by sending a much more considerable sum than was necessary to pay the expenses of his return home. Thus paternal joy came, without knowing it, to the assistance of love. Frédéric was able to repay his friend the money which he had borrowed from the latter, and to convince him of the uselessness of his remonstrances. He wished to make Bernerette a present, but she refused it.

“Give me a supper as a present,” she said to him ; “all that I wish from you is yourself.”

With a character as gay as that of this young girl, as soon as she had the least trouble, it was easy to notice it. Frédéric found her sad one day, and asked her the reason for it. After some hesitation, she drew a letter from her pocket.

“It is an anonymous letter,” she said ; “the young man who is living with me received it yesterday, and gave it to me, saying that he had no faith in unsigned accusations. Who wrote that? I do not know. The spelling is as bad as the style ; but it is none the less dangerous for me : I am denounced as a ruined girl, and they go so far as to mention exactly the day and hour of our last meeting. It must be some one in this house, a portress or a chambermaid ; I do not know what to do, nor how to protect myself from the peril which threatens me.”

“What peril?” demanded Frédéric.

"I believe," said Bernerette, laughing, "that it is a question of nothing less than my life. I have to deal with a man of a violent temper, and if he knew that I am deceiving him, he would be quite capable of killing me."

Frédéric reread the letter in vain, and examined it in a hundred ways; he could not recognize the handwriting. He returned home very anxious, and resolved not to see Bernerette for some days; but he soon received a note from her.

"He knows all," she wrote; "I do not know who has told, I believe it is the portress. He will go to see you; he wishes to fight with you. I have not the strength to say more; I am more dead than alive."

Frédéric spent the entire day in his room; he expected a call from his rival, or at least a challenge. He was surprised to receive neither the one nor the other. The next day, and during the following week, the same silence. At last he learned that Monsieur de N——, the lover of Bernerette, had had an explanation with her, after which she had left the house and had run away to her mother's home. Left alone and desolate at the loss of a mistress whom he loved to desperation, the young man had gone out one morning and had never reappeared. At the end of four days, as no one had seen him return, the door of his apartment had been forced open; he had left a letter on his table, which

announced his fatal intention. A week later the remains of this unfortunate man were found in the forest of Meudon.

III

The impression which Frédéric felt at the news of this suicide was profound. Although he did not know this young man, and had never spoken a word to him, he knew his name, which was that of an illustrious family. He saw his relations arrive, the brothers in mourning, and he knew the sad details of the search which they had been obliged to make to discover the body. The seals were put on; soon the upholsterers took away the furniture, and the window near which Bernerette had worked remained open, and showed only the walls of a deserted apartment.

One never feels remorse unless he is guilty, and Frédéric had no serious reproach to make himself, since he had deceived no one, and had not even clearly known how matters had stood between the girl and her lover. But he felt himself overcome with horror at seeing himself the involuntary cause of such a cruel fatality. "Oh, if he had only come to seek me!" he said to himself; "if he had only turned against me the

weapon of which he made such a sad use ! I do not know how I should have acted, nor what would have happened, but my heart tells me that no such misfortune would have come to pass. Oh, that I had only known that he loved to this degree ! that I could have been a witness to his grief ! Who knows ? Perhaps I should have gone away ; perhaps I should have convinced him, cured him, led him to reason by frank and friendly words. At any rate, he would still be living, and I should have liked better that he had broken my arm than to think that in dying he had perhaps pronounced my name."

In the midst of these sad reflections, a letter arrived from Bernerette ; she was ill in bed. During his last scene with her, Monsieur de N—— had struck her and she had received a dangerous fall. Frédéric left the house to go to see her, but he had not the courage to do so. In keeping her for his mistress, he seemed to commit a murder. He decided to go away ; after having put his affairs in order, he sent what he could spare to the poor girl, and promised not to abandon her if she fell into want ; then he returned to Besançon.

As may be fancied, his arrival was a festival day for his family. He was congratulated upon his new title, he was overwhelmed with questions about his stay in Paris ; his father conducted him with pride to the houses of all the distinguished persons in the town. Soon a project which had been conceived during his

absence was made known to him. His marriage had been thought of, and the hand of a young and pretty girl whose fortune was considerable was proposed to him. He neither refused nor accepted ; there was a sadness in his soul which nothing could surmount. He allowed himself to be taken wherever he was wanted, replied his best to those who questioned him, and forced himself to pay court to his intended ; but it was without pleasure, and almost in spite of himself, that he acquitted himself of these duties: not that Bernerette was dear enough to him to cause him to renounce an advantageous marriage, but the last events had acted too strongly upon him for him to recover from them so quickly. In a heart troubled by memories, there is no place for hope ; these two sentiments, in their extreme sharpness, exclude each other ; it is only as they grow weaker, that they are reconciled to each other ; that they grow milder, and end by appealing to one another.

The young woman in question had a very melancholy disposition. She felt neither sympathy nor repugnance for Frédéric ; with her, as with him, it was through obedience that she lent herself to the projects of her parents. Thanks to the readiness with which they were allowed to talk together, they both learned the truth. They felt that love did not come to them, and that friendship came without effort. One day, when both families had gone to the country for pleasure, Frédéric gave his arm to his future wife as they were returning.

She asked him if he had not left his heart in Paris, and he related to her his story. She began by finding it laughable, and treated it as a trifle; Frédéric did not speak of it otherwise than as a foolish matter without importance, but the end of the story seemed serious to Mademoiselle Darcy—that was the young woman's name. "Great God!" she said, "that is indeed cruel. I understand what has occurred to you, and I esteem you the more for it. But you are not guilty; let time do its work. Your parents are, without doubt, as desirous as mine to conclude this marriage which they have in their minds. Trust to me; I will spare you as much trouble as possible, and certainly the pain of a refusal."

With these words, they parted. Frédéric suspected that Mademoiselle Darcy had on her side some confidence to give him. He did not deceive himself. She loved a young man without fortune, who had asked for her hand, and had been refused by her parents. In her turn, she gave the proof of her frankness, and Frédéric swore that he would not allow her to repent it. A tacit agreement to resist their parents was established between them, while appearing to submit to their wishes. They were seen constantly together dancing at balls, talking in drawing-rooms, walking alone on the promenades; but after having behaved all day like two lovers, they shook hands at parting, and repeated every evening to each other that they would never become husband and wife. Such situations are very dangerous. They have

a charm which allures, and the heart gives itself up to it with confidence; but love is a jealous divinity, which is aroused as soon as one ceases to fear it, and sometimes one loves because he has promised not to do so. After some time, Frédéric recovered his gaiety; he said to himself that, after all, it was not his fault that a simple intrigue had had such a fatal ending; that, in his place, every one else would have acted as he had, and that, in fact, he must forget that which it was impossible to repair. He began to find pleasure in seeing Mademoiselle Darcy every day; she seemed to him more beautiful than at first sight. He did not change his behavior toward her, but little by little he put into his conversation and into his protestations of friendship a warmth which could not be misunderstood. The young girl also did not misunderstand it; feminine instinct promptly warned her of what was taking place in Frédéric's heart. She was flattered and almost touched by it; but whether she was more constant than he, or whether she did not wish to retract her word, she determined to break with him entirely and to take away from him all hope. For this it was necessary to wait until he explained himself more clearly, and the occasion presented itself soon.

One evening, when Frédéric had shown himself more ardent than usual, Mademoiselle Darcy, while they were drinking tea, went and seated herself in a little secluded room. A certain romantic disposition, which is often

natural to women, lent on that day an indefinable attraction to her glance and her speech. Without acknowledging to herself what she felt, she perceived that she had the power of producing a deep impression, and she yielded to the temptation of using her power, even though she might suffer from it herself. Frédéric had seen her leave the room; he followed her, approached her, and after some words about the air of sadness that he noticed in her: "Well, mademoiselle," he said to her, "do you think that the day is approaching when it will be necessary to declare yourself in a positive manner? Have you found any means of avoiding that necessity? I come to consult you about it. My father questions me incessantly, and I no longer know what answer to give him. What objection can I raise against this alliance, and how can I say that I do not want you? If I pretend to find in you too little beauty, wisdom, or mind, no one would believe me. Therefore I must say that I love another, and the longer we delay, the more I should lie in saying so. How could it be otherwise? Can I see you constantly with impunity? How can the image of an absent person fail to be effaced before you? Tell me, then, what I must reply, and what you think yourself. Have not your intentions changed? Will you allow your youth to be wasted in solitude? Will you remain faithful to a memory, and will this memory be sufficient for you? If I judge of it by myself, I avow

that I cannot believe it ; because I feel that it is deceiving one's self to resist his own heart, and the common destiny which wills that one forgets and loves. I will keep my word if you order it ; but I cannot prevent myself from telling you that this obedience will be cruel to me. Know, then, that now our future depends upon you only, so give your verdict."

"I am not surprised at what you tell me," replied Mademoiselle Darcy ; "that is the language of all men. For them, the present moment is everything, and they would sacrifice their entire lives to the temptation of paying a compliment. Women also have temptations of this kind ; but the difference is that they resist them. I did wrong in trusting you, and it is just that I should pay the penalty for it ; but even if my refusal should wound you and draw your resentment upon me, you will learn from me a fact the truth of which you will perceive later,—that is, that one only loves once in a lifetime, if one is capable of loving. Inconstant people do not love ; they play with the heart. I know that it is said that friendship is sufficient for marriage ; that is possible in certain cases ; but how would that be possible for us, since you know that I love another ? Even supposing that to-day you should abuse my confidence and lead me to marry you, what would you do with this secret when I am your wife ? Would not this be enough to render happiness impossible for both of us ? I am willing to believe that your Parisian love-affairs are

only the follies of a young man. Do you think that they have given me a good opinion of your heart, and that it is a matter of indifference to me to know that you are such a frivolous character? Believe me, Frédéric," she added, taking the young man's hand—"believe me, you will love some day; and that day, if you remember me, you will perhaps have some esteem for her who dared to speak to you thus. You will then know what love is." At these words, Mademoiselle Darcy arose and went out. She had seen Frédéric's trouble, and the effect that her words produced upon him; she left him full of sadness. The poor fellow was too inexperienced to suppose that there could be coquetry in such a formal declaration. He did not know the strange motives which sometimes govern women's actions; he did not know that she who really wishes to refuse contents herself with saying "No," and that she who explains herself wishes to be convinced.

However that may be, this conversation had the most unfortunate influence upon him. Instead of trying to persuade Mademoiselle Darcy, he avoided, on the following days, every occasion of speaking to her alone. Too proud to repent, she allowed him to withdraw himself in silence. He sought his father, and talked to him of the necessity of finishing his law studies. As regards the marriage, Mademoiselle Darcy undertook to give the first reply; she did not dare to refuse absolutely, for fear of irritating her family; but she asked

to be given time to reflect, and she was allowed to be at peace for a year. Accordingly, Frédéric made his arrangements to return to Paris; his allowance was increased a little, and he left Besançon still sadder than when he came. The remembrance of his last conversation with Mademoiselle Darcy followed him like an evil omen, and while the mail-coach carried him far from his home, he repeated to himself, in a low tone of voice: "You will know what love is."

IV

This time he did not take lodgings in the Latin quarter; his work was at the Palais de Justice, and he took a room near the Quai aux Fleurs. Scarcely had he arrived, when he received a visit from his friend Gérard. During Frédéric's absence, the latter had inherited a considerable fortune. The death of an old uncle had made him rich; he had an apartment in the Chaussée d'Antin, a carriage and horses; besides which, he supported a pretty mistress; he saw many young people; cards were played in his rooms all day and sometimes all night. He went to balls, theatres, and the promenades; in a word, he had become, from the retiring student, a young man of the world.

Without abandoning his studies, Frédéric was drawn into the whirlwind which surrounded his friend. He soon learned there to despise his old pleasures of *La Chaumi  re*. Those who are called the gilded youth would not show themselves there. Often they are in worse company,—no matter; custom sanctions it,—and it is nobler to divert one's self at Musard's with scamps, than on the Boulevard Neuf with honest people. G  rard invariably desired that Fr  d  ric should join him in any pleasure party he attended. The latter resisted as much as possible, and ended by allowing himself to be taken. Thus he made the acquaintance of a society which was unknown to him; he saw, intimately, actresses and dancers, and the proximity of these divinities has an immense effect upon a provincial; he became intimate with gamblers, with scatterbrains, with persons who talked with a smile of the four thousand francs which they had lost the night before; it happened that he passed the night with them, and he saw them when the day came, after having spent twelve hours in drinking and playing cards, ask themselves, as they made their toilets, what would be their amusements for the day. He was invited to suppers where every man had at his side a woman who belonged to him, to whom not a word was spoken, and who was taken away, in going out, as one would take his cane or hat. In short, he joined in all the irregularities, all the pleasures, of that thoughtless, irresponsible life, sheltered from sadness,

which is led alone by some chosen ones, who seem to belong to the human race only through its enjoyment.

He began by being all the better for it, as he lost there all his peevishness and all troublesome memories. Indeed, in such a circle there is no way to be simply preoccupied ; one must either amuse himself or go away. But at the same time Frédéric did harm to himself, as he lost his seriousness and his orderly habits, his supreme safeguard. He had not the wherewithal to gamble for a long time, and he gambled ; his ill-luck willed that he should commence by winning, and his gains gave him the means to lose. He had been fitted by an old tailor of Besançon, who had supplied the family for a number of years ; he wrote him that he did not wish his clothes any more, and he employed a fashionable tailor. He no longer had time to go to the law-courts ; how could he have had time, being with those young persons who in their busy idleness have not the leisure to read a newspaper ? So he finished his law studies on the boulevard ; he dined at the restaurants, went to the Bois, had fine clothes, and gold in his pockets ; he needed only a horse and a mistress to be an accomplished dandy.

This is not saying a little, it is true ; in times past a man was not a man, and really lived, unless he possessed three things,—a horse, a woman, and a sword. Our prosaic and pusillanimous age has at once taken away the noblest, the surest, the most inseparable to

the man of courage, of these three friends. No longer does any one have a sword at his side ; and, alas ! but few persons have horses, while there are those who boast of living without a mistress.

One day, when Frédéric had urgent debts to pay, he saw himself forced to apply to his companions of pleasure, who had not been able to oblige him. At last, he secured upon his note three thousand francs from a banker who knew his father. When he had this sum in his pocket, feeling happy and tranquil after much agitation, he took a walk on the boulevard before returning home. As he passed the corner of the Rue de la Paix to return to the Tuileries, a young woman, who gave her arm to a young man, began to laugh at seeing him ; it was Bernerette. He stopped, and followed her with his eyes ; she also turned her head several times ; he changed his route without well knowing why, and found himself at the Café de Paris.

He had walked about for an hour, and was going up to take dinner when Bernerette passed again. She was alone ; he accosted her and asked her if she wished to come and dine with him. She accepted and took his arm, but she begged him to take her to an eating-house less conspicuous.

“ Let us go to a tavern,” she said gaily ; “ I do not like to dine in this street.”

They got into a hack, and, as formerly, they gave each other a thousand kisses before they asked the news.

The conversation was joyous, and the sad memories were banished from it. Yet Bernerette complained that Frédéric did not come to see her; but he contented himself by replying that she ought very well to know why. She read her lover's eyes immediately and understood that she must be silent. Seated near a good fire, as upon the first day, they thought only of enjoying in liberty the happy meeting which they owed to chance. The champagne excited their gaiety, and with it came those tender words, inspired by this wine, of the poet disdained by the epicure. After dinner they went to the theatre. At eleven o'clock, Frédéric asked Bernerette where he should take her; for some time she kept silence, part in shame, part in fear; then encircling the young man's neck with her arm, she said, timidly, in his ear:

“To your house.”

He expressed some astonishment at thus finding her free.

“Ah! even if I were not so,” she replied, “would you not believe that I love you? But I am,” she added immediately, seeing Frédéric hesitate; “the person who accompanied me just now, caused you to reflect; did you look at him?”

“No; I only looked at you.”

“He is a good fellow; he is a linen draper and rich enough; he wishes to marry me.”

“To marry you, you say? Is it serious?”

“Very serious ; I have not deceived him, he knows the entire story of my life ; but he is in love with me. He knows my mother, and a month ago he asked for me. My mother did not wish to say anything about me ; she wanted to beat me when she learned that I had told him everything. He wishes me to be his cashier ; it would be a nice enough place, for he earns fifteen thousand francs a year ; unfortunately, that cannot be.”

“Why? Is there any obstacle?”

“I will tell you that ; let us begin by going to your house.”

“No ; talk to me frankly first.”

“But you are going to laugh at me. I have esteem and friendship for him ; he is the best man on earth ; but he is too fat.”

“Too fat? What nonsense!”

“You did not see him ; he is short and fat, and you have such a fine figure !”

“And his face, how is that?”

“Not very bad ; he has one merit,—that is, he has an air of goodness, and he is good. I am more grateful to him than I can tell him, and if I had wished, even without marrying me, he would still have been kind to me. I would not vex him for anything in the world, and if I could render him a service, I would do it with all my heart.”

“Then marry him, if it be so.”

“ He is too fat ; it is impossible. Come, let us go to your house ; we will talk there.”

Frédéric allowed himself to be led, and when he awoke the following morning, he had forgotten his past troubles and the beautiful eyes of Mademoiselle Darcy.

V

Bernerette left him after breakfast, and did not wish him to take her home. He put aside the money which had been lent him, entirely resolved to pay his debts : but he did not hurry himself to pay them. Some time afterward there was a supper at Gérard’s ; and the guests did not depart until daybreak. As he was going out, Gérard stopped him.

“ What are you going to do ? ” he said ; “ it is too late to sleep ; let us breakfast in the country.”

The party was arranged, and Gérard sent to wake his mistress and to ask her to get ready.

“ It is a pity,” he said to his friend, “ that you have not also some one to take ; we should make a party of four, and that would be gayer.”

“ Never mind that,” replied Frédéric, yielding to an impulse of self-love ; “ if you wish, I will write a few

words which your groom can take near at hand. Although it may be a little early, Bernerette will come, I do not doubt."

"Indeed! And who may Bernerette be? Not your grisette of former days?"

"Precisely; it was on her account that you made me such a moral speech."

"Really?" said Gérard, laughing; "but perhaps I was right," he added, "for you have such a constant disposition, and that is dangerous with these girls."

As he spoke, his mistress entered; Bernerette did not keep them waiting; she arrived dressed in her best. A livery carriage was sent for, and, spite of rather cold weather, they set out for Montmorency. The sky was clear, the sun shone, the young men smoked, and the two women sang; at the end of a league they were friends. They took a horseback ride; starting into a gallop in the woods, Frédéric felt his heart beat; never had he felt so much at ease; Bernerette was near him, and he noticed with pride the impression which the charming face of the girl, animated with her ride, produced upon Gérard. After a roundabout way in the forest, they stopped on a little hill, where there was a small house and a mill. The miller's wife gave them a bottle of white wine, and they sat down on the moor.

"We should have brought some cakes," said Gérard; "one has a quick digestion on horseback, and I feel an

appetite ; we could have made a little repast upon the grass before retaking the road to the inn."

Bernerette drew from her pocket a cheese-cake, which she had bought in passing Saint-Denis, and offered it with such charming grace to Gérard, that he kissed her hand to thank her.

" Let us do better," she said ; " instead of returning to the village, let us dine here. Surely that good woman has a quarter of mutton in her little house ; besides, there are the chickens which can be roasted for us. Let us ask if they cannot do this ; while the dinner is being prepared, we will take a turn in the woods. What do you think of it ? That will be worth more than the antique partridges of the *Cheval-Blanc*."

The proposition was accepted ; the miller's wife wished to excuse herself ; but, dazzled by a piece of gold which Gérard gave her, she began the work immediately and sacrificed her farmyard. Never was a dinner more gay. It prolonged itself a much longer time than the guests had counted upon. Soon the sun disappeared behind the beautiful hills of Saint-Leu ; thick clouds covered the valley, and a beating rain began to fall.

" What is going to become of us ? " said Gérard. " We have almost two leagues to make to regain Montmorency ; and this is not a summer storm, which we have only to let pass : it is a veritable winter rain, that will last all night."

“Why so?” said Bernerette; “a winter rain passes like any other. Let us have a game of cards to distract ourselves; when the moon rises, we shall have fine weather.”

The miller’s wife, as may be supposed, did not have any cards at her house; consequently they could have no game. Cécile, the mistress of Gérard, commenced to regret the rain and to tremble for her new dress. It was necessary to put the horses under a shed for shelter. Two tall, ill-looking lads entered the room; they were the miller’s sons. They demanded their supper, little pleased to find strangers. Gérard grew impatient, Frédéric was not in a good humor. Nothing is more dismal than the people who come to laugh, when an unexpected accident destroys their joy. Bernerette alone preserved hers, and seemed to care for nothing.

“Since we have no cards,” she said, “I am going to propose a game. Although it is November, let us try at once to find a fly.”

“A fly,” said Gérard; “what do you wish to do with it?”

“Let us search, however; we will see afterward.”

All hunted; the fly was found. The poor insect was benumbed by the approach of winter. Bernerette seized him delicately, and placed him in the middle of the table. Then she made every one sit down.

“Now,” she said, “let each of us take a piece of sugar and place it before us on the table. Let each of

us put a piece of money in a plate; that will be the stake. No one must speak or move. Let the fly wake up; see, already it flutters; it has to put itself on a piece of sugar, then leave it, go to another, return according to its caprice. Every time a piece of sugar attracts him, and he lights upon it, the person to whom the piece of sugar belongs will take a piece of money, until the plate is empty, and then we commence again."

Bernerette's bright idea restored the gaiety. Her instructions were followed; two or three other flies came. Every one, in the most religious silence, followed them with the eyes, while they whirled about in the air over the table. If one of them landed on a piece of sugar, there was a general laugh. Thus an hour passed away, and the rain had ceased.

"I cannot bear an ill-tempered woman," Gérard said to his friend on their way home. "I must confess, gaiety is a great advantage, perhaps the best of all, for with it one can do without the others. Your young girl found the means of changing an hour of tedium into pleasure, and that alone gives me a better opinion of her than if she had made an epic poem. Will your love endure for a long time?"

"I do not know," Frédéric replied, affecting the same thoughtlessness as his companion; "if she pleases you, you may make love to her."

"You are not honest, for you love her, and she loves you."

"Yes, through a caprice, as formerly."

"Take care of these caprices."

"Come, follow us, then, gentlemen," cried out Bernerette, who galloped in advance with Cécile. They stopped upon a plateau, and made a halt. The moon was rising; it slowly cleared itself from the dark trees, and, in proportion as it mounted, the clouds seemed to fly before it. Below the plateau, there lay extended a valley where the wind quietly agitated a sea of dark verdure; the eye could distinguish nothing there, and at six leagues from Paris one could have believed himself to be before a ravine in the Black Forest. Suddenly the moon came above the horizon, an immense ray of light crept over the tops of the trees and filled the space in an instant; the tall forest-trees, the groups of chestnut-trees, the glades, the roads, and the hills stood out in the distance as if by enchantment. The party of equestrians looked at one another, astonished and glad to be able to distinguish one another's features.

"Come, Bernerette," cried Frédéric, "give us a song!"

"Sad or gay?" she asked.

"As you will. A hunting song! The echo will reply here, perhaps."

Bernerette threw back her veil and struck up the air of a fanfare; but suddenly she stopped. The brilliant star, Venus, which sparkled upon the mountain, had caught her sight; and as if under the charm of a

tenderer thought, she sang the following verses, which a passage from Ossian had inspired Frédéric to write, to a German air :

Pale twilight star, sweet herald of the distant train,
Whose radiant brow uprising crowns the coming night,
From thy palace of azure in empyreal light
What see'st thou in the lowly plain ?
The storm has passed, the warring winds have spent their force,
The forest, trembling, weeps upon the fragrant heath,
The firefly, too, disports its phosphorescent sheath
O'er scented mead, in airy course.
What seek'st thou on the slumbering earth, in peaceful rest ?
E'en now I see thee toward the hills all slowly sink,
And smiling while thou'rt fading, melancholy guest,
Whose trembling, paling glance is day's last silvery link.

Thou star that gently sinking to the verdant height,
Sad, silver tear thou seem'st on Night's dark vesture shed,
Guiding, watcher from afar, with thy pale, soft light,
The anxious swain whose fleecy cares his footsteps tread ;
Whither speed'st thou 'neath the infinite starry bower ?
Is't to couch thee on some bank or reedy bed ?
Or, all lovely as thou art, in this silent hour,
Like precious pearl, to sink beneath the waters dread ?
If thou must die, O brilliant, lovely, astral ray,
Or in the sea profound thy golden locks must steep,
Leave us not yet, but one more moment with us stay ;
O star of love ! still yet thy silent empire keep.

While Bernerette was singing, the rays of the moon falling upon her face tinged her with a charming pallor.

Cécile and Gérard complimented her upon the freshness and purity of her voice, and Frédéric kissed her tenderly.

They returned to the inn and had supper. At dessert, Gérard, whose brain had become heated, thanks to a bottle of Madeira, became so ardent and gallant that Cécile tried to quarrel with him ; they disputed with so much tartness, that, Cécile having left the table, Gérard followed her in a bad humor. Alone with Bernerette, Frédéric asked her if she was deceived as to the cause of this dispute.

“No,” she replied ; “these things are not poetry, and every one knows that.”

“Indeed ! What do you think of it ? This young man has a desire for you ; his mistress tires him, and you would only have to say the word, I think, to make him leave her.”

“What is that to us ! Are you jealous ?”

“Quite the contrary ; and you know very well that I have not the right to be so.”

“Explain yourself ; what do you mean ?”

“My dear child, I mean that neither my fortune nor my occupation allow me to be your lover. It is not now that you learn this, for I have never deceived you. If I wished to play the great lord with you, I should ruin myself without rendering you happy. My allowance hardly suffices me ; besides, after a short time I must return to Besançon. You see, I explain myself

clearly upon this subject, although it goes much against my heart ; but there are certain things which I cannot explain ; so it is for you to reflect and to think of the future.”

“ That is to say, that you advise me to make love to your friend.”

“ No, he must make love to you ; Gérard is rich, and I am not ; he lives in Paris in the midst of all its pleasures, and I am destined to be a provincial lawyer. You please him greatly, and perhaps that is a good thing for you.”

In spite of his apparent tranquillity, Frédéric was moved as he said this. Bernerette kept silent, and went and leaned against the window ; she wept, and forced herself to hide her tears ; Frédéric noticed it and approached her.

“ Leave me,” she said. “ You would not deign to be jealous of me ; I understand it, and I suffer from it without pitying myself ; but you talk to me too severely, my friend ; you treat me entirely as a ruined girl, and you grieve me without reason.”

It had been decided that they should spend the night at the inn, and return to Paris the following day. Bernerette took off the handkerchief which was around her neck, and, while wiping her eyes, she tied it around her lover’s head. Then, leaning upon his shoulder, she drew him gently toward the alcove.

“ Ah ! naughty one ! ” she said, kissing him, “ can you help loving me ? ”

Frédéric pressed her in his arms. He thought to what he exposed himself in yielding to a movement of tenderness; the more he was tempted to give himself up to it, the more he mistrusted himself. He was ready to say that he loved her. These dangerous words died upon his lips; but Bernerette felt them in her heart, and they went to sleep both satisfied,—one at not having spoken them, the other at having understood them.

VI

This time, upon their return, Frédéric took Bernerette home. He found she was so poorly lodged, that he easily understood from what motive she had refused at first to permit him to go home with her. She lived in a furnished house, the entrance to which was a dark alley. She had only two little rooms, barely furnished. Frédéric tried to ask her several questions concerning the miserable position to which she seemed reduced, but she scarcely replied to them.

Some days afterward he came to see her and entered the alley, when a strange noise was heard above from the stairway. Women cried; they called for help, they

threatened, they talked of sending for the police. In the midst of these confused voices, there predominated that of a young man, whom Frédéric soon saw. He was pale, covered with torn clothing, intoxicated with wine and anger at the same time.

“ You will pay it to me, Louise ! ” he cried, striking the railing of the stairs ; “ you will pay it to me ; I shall find you again, and I shall know how to make you obey, or to tear you away from here. I care much for your threats and for the bawling of these women ! Be sure that you will see me in a short time.” He descended as he talked, and went out of the house furious. Frédéric hesitated to go up, when he saw Bernerette upon the landing. She explained to him the cause of this scene. The man who had just gone away was her brother.

“ You have heard this sad name of Louise,” she said, in weeping, “ and you know that it belongs to me, to my sorrow. This evening my brother has been at a tavern ; and when he comes out of it, this is how he treats me, because I refuse to give him money in order to return there.”

In the midst of her disorder and her tears, she told Frédéric that which she had always tried to hide from him. Her parents were joiners ; very poor, and after having horribly maltreated her during her infancy, they sold her, at the age of sixteen, to a man who was no longer young. This man, rich and generous, had

given her some education ; but he soon died, and, left without resource, she engaged herself with a troupe of provincial comedians. Her brother had followed her from town to town in this new condition, forcing her to give him whatever she gained, and overwhelming her with blows and insults when she could not satisfy his demands. At last, having attained her eighteenth year, she had found the way to emancipate herself ; but even the protection of the law would not guarantee her against the visits of this odious brother, who terrified her by his acts of violence and dishonored her by his conduct. Such, in fact, was about the story which Bernerette's sorrow drew from her, the truth of which Frédéric could not doubt, after the way in which it had been disclosed to him.

Even if he had had no love for the poor girl, he would have felt touched by pity. He found out where the brother lived ; and some pieces of gold and some forcible language arranged matters. The portress received orders to say that Bernerette had changed her rooms, if the young man presented himself again. But it was, indeed, very little, only thus to assure the tranquillity of a woman who lacked everything. Instead of paying his own debts, Frédéric paid those of Bernerette ; she tried in vain to dissuade him from this ; he did not wish to reflect either about the imprudence which he committed or the consequences it might have ; he allowed himself to be carried away by his heart, and

vowed, whatever might happen, never to repent that which he had just done.

However, he was soon forced to repent it; for, to carry out the engagements which he had made, he was obliged to contract new ones more difficult and onerous than the first. He had not received from nature that careless character which in such circumstances rids itself at least of the fear of future evil; on the contrary, foresight alone remained to him of the qualities which he had lost; he would have become gloomy and taciturn, if one could be so at his age. His friends remarked this change; he did not wish to tell them the cause of it; to deceive others on this account, he dissimulated with himself, and allowed his fate to be made, through weakness or necessity.

Yet with Bernerette he never changed his speech; he talked to her always of his near departure; but although he talked, he did not leave, and he went to her house every day. When he was accustomed to the stairs, he did not find the alley so dark; the two little rooms, which had seemed so dismal to him at first, appeared gay to him; the sun shone there in the morning, and their small dimensions made them warmer; a place was found in them for a hired piano. In the neighborhood there was a good restaurant, from which their dinner was brought. Bernerette had one talent which women only possess sometimes,—that of being thoughtless and economical at the same time; but to this she added a

merit still much more rare,—that of being contented with everything, and of having for her only idea the wish to give pleasure to others.

We must also mention her faults; without being lazy, she lived in inconceivable idleness. After having finished the duties of her little house with surprising quickness, she passed the whole day on the couch with her arms folded. She talked of sewing and embroidery as Frédéric did of going away,—that is to say, that she did nothing about it. Unfortunately, there are many women like this, especially in a certain class, who, more than all others, need an occupation. There are, in Paris, similar girls, born without bread, who have never touched a needle, and who would allow themselves to die of hunger while they rubbed their hands with almond-paste.

When the pleasures of the Carnival began, Frédéric, who went to all the balls, arrived at all hours at Bernerette's, sometimes at daybreak, sometimes in the middle of the night. Sometimes, as he rang at the door, he asked himself, in spite of himself, if he were going to find her alone; and if a rival had supplanted him, would he have had the right to complain? No, without doubt, since by his own avowal he refused to claim this right. Shall I say it? That which he feared, he almost wished at the same time. Then he would have had the courage to go away, and the infidelity of his mistress would have forced him to separate from

her. But Bernerette was always alone ; seated at the chimney-corner during the day, she combed her long hair which fell upon her shoulders ; if it were night when Frédéric rang, she ran half-naked, her eyes closed, and a smile on her lips ; she threw herself on his neck, still sleepy, lighted the fire, took from the cupboard whatever there was for supper, always quick and attentive, never asking whence her lover came. Who would have been able to resist a life so sweet, a love so rare and so ready ? Whatever may have been the cares of the day, Frédéric went to sleep happy ; and could he awake sad, when he saw his joyous love going and coming about the room, preparing the bath and the breakfast ?

If it be true that rare interviews and constantly-recurring obstacles render the passions more acute and lend the interest of curiosity to the pleasure, it must be avowed also that there is a strange charm, sweeter, more dangerous, perhaps, in the habit of living with one whom we love. This habit, it is said, leads to satiety ; it is possible ; but it gives confidence, the forgetfulness of self, and when love resists satiety, it is sheltered from all fear. Lovers who see each other only at long intervals are never sure of understanding one another ; they prepare themselves to be happy, they wish, mutually, to convince themselves that they are so, and they seek to find that which is not to be found,—that is to say, words to express what they feel. Those who live

together have no need to express anything ; they feel at the same time, they exchange glances, they press each other's hands as they walk ; they alone know one delicious enjoyment, the sweet languor of the morrow ; they calm the transports of love in the freedom of friendship ; I have sometimes thought of these charming ties, in seeing two swans upon the limpid stream allow themselves to be carried away by the current.

If a movement of generosity had at first allured Frédéric, it was the attraction of this new life for him, which captivated him. Unfortunately for the author of this story, there is only one pen, like that of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, which could give interest to the familiar details of a tranquil love. Yet this ready writer, to embellish his native reefs, had the torrid nights of the Isle de France, and the palm-trees whose shadows trembled on the naked arms of Virginia. It is in the presence of the richest nature that he paints his heroes to us ; shall I say that mine went every morning to the pistol-gallery of Tivoli, to their friend Gérard, sometimes to dine at Véry's, and afterward to the theatre ? Shall I say that when they were weary they played draughts at the chimney-corner ? Who would read such vulgar details ? And of what use when one word suffices ? They loved each other, they lived together ; that lasted about three months !

At the end of that time, Frédéric found himself in such a miserable position, that he announced to his

love the necessity of his separating from her. She had expected it for some time, and made no effort to retain him. She knew that he had made every possible sacrifice for her; therefore she could only resign herself, and hide from him the sorrow which she felt. Once more they dined together. As they went out, Frédéric slipped into Bernerette's muff a little paper which contained all the money he had. She went with him to his rooms, and kept silent on the way. When the carriage stopped, she kissed her lover's hand as she shed some tears, and they parted.

VII

Nevertheless, Frédéric had neither the intention nor the possibility of going away. On the one hand the obligations which he had contracted, on the other his law studies, kept him in Paris. He worked with ardor to chase away the wearisomeness which seized him; he ceased to go to Gérard's, shut himself up for a month, and no longer went out except to go to the law-court. But the solitude in which he suddenly found himself, after so much dissipation, plunged him into profound melancholy. Sometimes he passed whole days walking the length of his room, without opening a book or

knowing what to do. The Carnival had just ended; the cold winds of March succeeded the snows of February. Being distracted neither by pleasures nor by the society of his friends, Frédéric gave himself up with bitterness to the influence of that sad time of the year which is justly called the *dead season*.

Gérard came to see him, and asked him the reason for such a sudden seclusion. He made no mystery about it, but he refused his friend's offers of service.

"It is time," he said, "to break with the habits which can only lead me to my ruin. It is better to bear some wearisomeness than to expose one's self to real misfortunes."

He did not conceal the sorrow which he felt at being separated from Bernerette; and Gérard could only congratulate and pity him at the same time, concerning the determination which he had taken.

At mid-Lent, he went to the Opera ball. Few persons were there. This last good-bye to pleasures had not even the sweetness of a memory. The orchestra, more numerous than the public, played the quadrilles of the winter in the deserted hall. A few maskers strayed about the foyer; by their appearance and by their speech, it was noticeable that the women of good society no longer came to these forgotten *fêtes*. Frédéric was about to leave, when a domino seated herself near him; he recognized Bernerette, and she told him that she had come only in the hope of meeting him.

He asked her what she had done since he saw her; she replied that she was hoping to go upon the stage again, and was learning a part for her *début*. Frédéric was tempted to take her to supper; but he thought of the readiness with which, on a similar occasion, he had allowed himself to be influenced upon his return from Besançon; so he pressed her hand and left the hall.

It is said that grief is better than wearisomeness; it is a sorrowful saying, unfortunately true. Against grief, whatever it may be, a well-born soul finds energy and courage; a great sorrow is often a great blessing. Wearisomeness, on the contrary, preys upon and destroys man; the mind becomes weakened, the body remains immovable, and the thoughts float at hazard. To have no reason to live is a worse state than death. When prudence, interest, and reason are in opposition to a passion, it is easy for the first comer to blame justly him whom this passion leads away. Arguments abound on this subject, and, willingly or unwillingly, one must yield to them. But when the sacrifice is made, when reason and prudence are satisfied, what philosopher or what sophist is not at the end of his arguments? and what is there to say to the man who says to you: "I have followed your advice, but I have lost all; I have acted wisely, but I suffer?"

Such was Frédéric's situation. Bernerette wrote him twice. In her first letter she said that life had become

insupportable to her, she implored him to come to see her from time to time, and not to abandon her absolutely. He mistrusted himself too much to yield to this request. The second letter came some time afterward:

“I have seen my parents again,” said Bernerette, “and they commence to treat me more tenderly. One of my uncles is dead, and has left us some money. I have had some costumes made for my *début*, which will please you, and which I should like to show you. Come, then, for a moment to see me, if you are passing my door.”

This time Frédéric allowed himself to be persuaded. He made his love a visit; but nothing was true that she had told him. She had only wished to see him again. He was touched by this perseverance; but he felt only the more sadly the necessity of resisting it. At the first words that he uttered to broach this subject again, Bernerette closed his mouth.

“I know it,” she cried; “kiss me and go away.”

Gérard went into the country; he took Frédéric with him. The first fine days, and the exercise of horseback-riding, gave the latter a little gaiety. Gérard had done the same as he; he had, he said, *sent away* his mistress; he wished to live at liberty. The two young men rambled about the woods together, and made love to a pretty farmer’s wife of a neighboring market-town. But soon the invited guests from Paris

arrived ; walking was given up for cards ; the dinners became long and noisy ; Frédéric could not endure this life, which had lately dazzled him, and he returned to his solitude.

He received a letter from Besançon. His father announced to him that Mademoiselle Darcy was going to Paris with her family. In fact, she arrived in the course of the week ; Frédéric, although much against his wishes, presented himself at her home. He found her just as he had left her, faithful to her secret love, and ready to make use of this fidelity as a means of coquetry. Nevertheless, she declared that she had regretted some words a little too severely spoken during the last conversation at Besançon. She begged Frédéric to pardon her, if she had appeared to doubt his discretion, and she added, that, not wishing to marry, she again offered him her friendship, but this time forever. When one is neither gay nor happy, such offers are always welcome ; so the young man thanked her, and found some charm in passing his evenings with her from time to time.

A certain need of emotion sometimes incites *blasé* people to seek the extraordinary. It may seem surprising that a woman as young as Mademoiselle Darcy had this strange and dangerous characteristic ; nevertheless, it is true that she had it. It was not difficult for her to obtain Frédéric's confidence, and to make him tell her his love-affairs. Perhaps she would have been able to

console him ; in showing herself only as a coquette with him, she would at least have diverted him from his troubles ; but it pleased her to do the contrary. Instead of blaming him for his irregularities, she told him that love excused everything and that his follies did him honor ; instead of confirming him in his resolution, she repeated to him that she could not conceive how he could have formed it. "If I were a man," she said, "and if I had as much liberty as you have, nothing in the world could separate me from the woman I loved ; I would willingly expose myself to all misfortunes, to misery, if need be, rather than renounce my mistress."

Such language was indeed strange from the mouth of a young woman who knew nothing of the world, except the domestic life of her own family. But for this very reason it was all the more striking. Mademoiselle Darcy had two reasons for playing this part, which, moreover, pleased her. On the one hand, she wished to prove that she was large-hearted and to proclaim herself romantic ; on the other hand, she showed by this, that, far from finding it wrong that Frédéric had forgotten her, she approved of his passion. The poor boy was, for the second time, the dupe of these womanly artifices, and allowed himself to be persuaded by a child of seventeen. "You are right," he replied ; "life is so short and happiness is so rare here below, that one is indeed mad to reflect and to draw upon himself voluntary sorrows, when there are so many inevitable ones."

Then Mademoiselle Darcy changed the subject: "Does your Bernerette love you?" she asked, with an air full of contempt. "Do not tell me that she is only a grisette! What calculation can one make about this sort of woman? Would she be worthy of some sacrifices? Would she appreciate them?"

"I know nothing about that," replied Frédéric, "and I have not a great love for her myself," he added, in a light tone; "I have thought only, when near her, of passing the time agreeably. Now I weary myself, that is all."

"For shame!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Darcy. "What sort of a passion is that?"

Started on this subject, the young woman became excited; she talked of it as if it were a question of herself, and her active imagination found in it the means to exercise itself. "Is loving, then," she said, "merely whiling away the time? If you did not love this woman, what were you doing at her house? If you loved her, why did you leave her? She suffers, she weeps, perhaps; how could the miserable calculations of money find place in a noble heart? Are you, then, as cold, as much a slave to your interests, as my parents have been lately, when they made the sorrow of my life? Is that the rôle of a young man, and should you not blush at it? No, you do not know yourself whether you suffer, or what you regret; the first comer would console you; your mind is only idle.

"Ah! it is not in this manner that one loves! I predicted to you, at Besançon, that one day you would know what love is; but if you have not more courage, I predict to you to-day that you will never know it."

Frédéric returned home one evening after a conversation of this sort. Overtaken by the rain, he entered a café, where he drank a glass of punch. When long troubles have oppressed the heart, it only requires a slight excitement to cause it to beat, and it seems then that there is in us a vase too full, which overflows. When Frédéric left the café, he quickened his footsteps. Two months of solitude and of privations weighed upon him; he felt an unconquerable desire to shake off the yoke of his reason and to breathe more at ease. Without thinking, he took his way to Bernerette's house; the rain had ceased; by the light of the moon he looked at his love's windows, the door, the street, which were so familiar to him. Tremblingly, he put his hand on the bell, and he asked himself, as formerly, if he were going to find, in the little chamber, the fire covered with ashes and the supper ready. At the moment of ringing, he hesitated.

"But what harm will there be," he said to himself, "if I should pass an hour there, and if I should ask Bernerette for a reminder of the old love? What danger can I run? Shall we not both be free tomorrow? Since necessity separates us, why should I fear to see her for a moment?"

It was midnight ; he rang gently, and the door was opened. As he mounted the stairway, the portress called him and said there was no one there. It was the first time that he had happened not to find Bernerette at home. He thought that she had gone to the theatre, and replied that he would wait, but the portress opposed this. After having hesitated for a long time, at last she declared to him that Bernerette went out early, and that she was not to return until the following day.

VIII

What is the use of feigning indifference when one loves : it can only bring cruel suffering on the day that the truth prevails ? Frédéric had so many times vowed to himself that he would not be jealous of Bernerette, he had so often repeated it before his friends, that he had finished by believing it himself. He went back to his rooms on foot, whistling a dance.

“ She has another lover,” he said to himself. “ So much the better for her ; it is as I would wish. Henceforth I shall be at peace.”

But hardly had he arrived home, when he felt a deadly weakness. He seated himself, buried his face in his hands,

as if to restrain his thoughts. After a useless fight, nature was the stronger: he raised his face bathed in tears, and found some relief in avowing to himself what he felt.

Extreme languor succeeded this violent attack. Solitude became intolerable to him, and for several days he passed his time in paying calls, in taking walks without any object. Sometimes he endeavored to recover the carelessness which he had affected; at others, he gave himself up to blind anger, to projects of vengeance. A disgust of life seized him. He remembered the sad circumstances which had accompanied the birth of his love; this fatal example was before his eyes.

“I commence to understand it,” he said to Gérard; “I am no longer astonished that death is wished for in such cases. It is not for a woman that a man kills himself; it is because it is useless and impossible to live when one suffers to this degree, whatever may be the cause of it.”

Gérard knew his friend too well to doubt his despair, and he loved him too much to leave him to it. He found the means, through powerful influence, which he had never employed for himself, to have Frédéric attached to an embassy. He presented himself one morning at Frédéric’s rooms with an order for departure from the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

“Travelling,” he said to him, “is the best, the only remedy for grief. To make you decide to leave Paris,

I became a solicitor, and, thank Heaven, I have succeeded. If you are courageous, you will set out immediately for Berne, where the minister sends you."

Frédéric did not hesitate. He thanked his friend, and busied himself at once in putting his affairs in order. He wrote to his father to inform him of his new projects and to ask his consent. The reply was favorable. At the end of a fortnight his debts were paid. There was no longer anything to prevent Frédéric's departure, and he went to get his passport.

Mademoiselle Darcy asked him a thousand questions, but he no longer wished to reply to them. So long as he had not clearly seen his own heart, he had lent himself, through weakness, to the curiosity of his young confidante. But now his suffering was too real for him to consent to make sport of it, and, in being aware of the danger of his passion, he had understood how frivolous was the interest which Mademoiselle Darcy took in it. So he did what all men do in a similar case. To help his own cure, he pretended that he was cured, that a love-affair had been able to dazzle him, but that he was of an age to think of more serious matters. Mademoiselle Darcy, as may be supposed, did not approve of such sentiment; she saw nothing serious in this world but love; the rest seemed to her contemptible. Such, at least, were her words. Frédéric let her talk, and agreed with her, with a good grace, that he should never know how to love. His heart told him

well enough the contrary, and, in making himself out as inconstant, he would have liked not to lie.

The less courage he felt, the more he hastened his departure. Yet he could not prevent himself from one thought which beset him. Who was Bernerette's new lover? What was she doing? Ought he to attempt to see her just once more? Gérard was not of this opinion; his principle was to do nothing by halves. From the moment when Frédéric had decided to go away, he had advised him to forget all. "What do you wish to know?" he said to him; "either Bernerette will tell you nothing, or she will alter the truth. Since it is proved that another love possesses her, what is the good of making her avow it? A woman is never sincere upon this subject with an old lover, even when all reconciliation is impossible. Besides, what do you hope for? She no longer loves you."

Gérard designedly expressed himself in such harsh terms so as to strengthen his friend. I leave it to those who have loved, to judge the effect which they produced. But many persons have loved who do not know it. The bonds of this world, even the strongest, in most cases, become loosened with time; only a few break. Those with whom absence, weariness, and satiety have weakened the love little by little, cannot imagine to themselves what they would have felt if a sudden blow had struck them. The coldest heart bleeds and opens at this blow; he who remains insensible to

it is not a man. Of all the wounds which death inflicts on us here below, before striking us down, this is the most profound. One must have seen, with eyes full of tears, the smile of an unfaithful mistress, to understand these words: *She no longer loves you!* One must have wept for a long time to call it to mind; it is a sad experience. If I wished to attempt to give an idea of it to those who are ignorant, I should tell them that I did not know which is the more cruel,—suddenly to lose the woman whom one loves, by her inconstancy or by her death.

Frédéric could make no reply to the severe counsels of Gérard; but an instinct stronger than reason struggled in him against this advice. He took another course to arrive at his object; without rendering to himself any account of what he wished, or of that which might come from it, he sought the means to have news of his love at any cost. He wore a ring, rather pretty, which Bernerette had often regarded with envious eyes. In spite of all his love for her, he had never been able to decide to give her this jewel, which his father had given him. He gave it to Gérard, telling him that it belonged to Bernerette, and he begged him to undertake to return to her this ring, which he said she had forgotten at his house. Gérard undertook this errand willingly, but he did not hurry to do it; Frédéric urged; he had to yield.

The two friends went out one morning together, and, while Gérard went to Bernerette's house, Frédéric awaited him at the Tuileries. He mingled sadly enough with the crowd of promenaders. It was not without regret that he gave up a family heirloom, which was dear to him; and what good could he hope from it? What could he learn which could console him? Gérard was going to see Bernerette, and if some word, some tears, escaped her, would he not believe it necessary to say nothing about it? Frédéric watched the gates of the garden, and expected every moment to see his friend return with an indifferent manner. What did it matter? He would have seen Bernerette; it would be impossible that he would have nothing to tell; who knows what chance may bring about? Perhaps he would have learned much in this visit. The more Gérard delayed his return, the more Frédéric hoped.

Meantime, the sky was cloudless; the trees began to be clothed with green. There is a tree in the Tuileries which is called the tree of the twentieth of March. It is a chestnut-tree, which they say was in bloom the day of the birth of the king of Rome, and which blooms every year at the same time. Frédéric had often seated himself under this tree; he returned there by habit in a reverie. The chestnut-tree was faithful to its poetical reputation; its branches scattered the first fragrance of the year. Women, children, and young people came and went. Every face reflected the

brightness of spring. Frédéric thought of the future, of his journey, of the country that he was going to see ; an anxiety mixed with hope agitated him in spite of himself ; all his surroundings seemed to call him to a new existence. He thought of his father, whose pride and support he was, from whom, since his birth, he had received only marks of tenderness. Little by little, gentler, healthier ideas gained the upper hand in his mind. The crowd which passed and repassed before him made him think of the mutability and instability of things. Is not a crowd a strange spectacle, when one reflects that every being has his own destiny ? Is there anything which should give us a more exact idea of what we are worth, and of what we are, in the eyes of Providence ? We must live, thought Frédéric, and we must obey the Supreme Guide. We must go forward, even if we suffer, for no one knows where he is going. I am free and quite young still ; I must take courage and be resigned.

As he was deep in these thoughts, Gérard appeared and ran toward him. He was pale and very much moved.

“ My friend,” he said, “ you must go there. Quickly, let us not lose time.”

“ Where are you taking me ? ”

“ To Bernerette’s. I have advised you as I believed right. But there are occasions where calculation is at fault, and prudence out of season.”

“What has happened, then?” exclaimed Frédéric.

“You will know; come, we must run.”

They went together to Bernerette’s.

“Go up alone,” said Gérard; “I will return in an instant;” and he went off.

Frédéric entered. The key was in the door, the shutters were closed.

“Bernerette,” he said, “where are you?”

No reply.

He entered into the darkness, and, by the light of a half-extinguished fire, he perceived his love seated on the floor near the fire-place.

“What is the matter with you?” he asked; “what has happened?”

The same silence.

He approached her and took her hand.

“Rise,” he said to her; “what are you doing there?”

But hardly had he uttered these words, than he started back with horror. The hand that he held was icy, and a lifeless body rolled at his feet.

Terrified, he called for help. Gérard entered, followed by a physician. The windows were opened; Bernerette was carried to her bed. The physician examined her, shook his head, and gave his orders. The symptoms were not to be doubted, the poor girl had taken poison; but what kind of poison? The physician did not know, and sought in vain to find out. He

commenced by bleeding the sick girl; Frédéric held her in his arms; she opened her eyes, recognized him and kissed him, then fell again into her stupor. At evening they made her take a cup of coffee; she came to herself as if she had awakened from a dream. Then they asked her what kind of poison she had used; at first she refused to tell, but, urged by the physician, she told him. A copper candlestick placed upon the mantel bore many file-marks; she had had recourse to this fearful means to increase the effect of a small dose of opium, the apothecary to whom she applied having refused to give her more of it.

IX

It was not until the end of a fortnight that she was entirely out of danger. She began to sit up and to take some nourishment; but her health was destroyed, and the physician declared that she would suffer all her life.

Frédéric did not leave her. He was still ignorant of the motive which had made her seek death, and he was astonished that not a person was anxious about her. In fact, during the fortnight, he had seen neither a relative nor a stranger come to visit her. Was it possible that her new lover had abandoned her under such

circumstances? Was the abandonment the cause of Bernerette's despair? These two suppositions appeared equally incredible to Frédéric, and his love had made him understand that she would make no explanations on the subject. Therefore he remained in cruel doubt, troubled by a secret jealousy, checked by love and pity.

In the midst of her troubles, Bernerette showed him the keenest tenderness. Full of gratitude for the care which he lavished upon her, she was, when near him, gayer than ever, but with a melancholy gaiety, and, so to speak, veiled with suffering. She made every effort to distract him, and to persuade him not to leave her alone. If he went out, she asked him at what hour he would return. She wished that he should dine at her bedside, and that she might go to sleep holding his hand. To divert him, she related a thousand stories of her past life; but as soon as it was a question of the present, and of her sad act, she remained mute. No question or entreaty of Frédéric could obtain any reply. If he insisted, she became dismal and sad.

One evening she was in bed; she had just been bled again, and a little blood still came from the badly-closed wound. With a smile, she looked at the purple drop that trickled down her marble-white arm.

"Do you still love me?" she asked Frédéric; "do not all these horrors disgust you with me?"

"I love you," he replied, "and nothing can separate us now."

"Is that true?" she asked, as she kissed him; "do not deceive me; tell me if it is a dream."

"No, it is not a dream; no, my beautiful and dear mistress, let us live peacefully, let us be happy."

"Alas! we cannot, we cannot!" she exclaimed in anguish. Then she added in a low tone: "And if we cannot, we must begin anew."

Although she had only murmured these last words, Frédéric had heard them, and they had made him shudder. She repeated them the next day to Gérard.

"My determination is made," he said to him; "I do not know what my father will say to it, but I love her, and whatever may happen, I shall not leave her to die."

He had, indeed, come to a dangerous decision, but the only one which offered itself to him. He wrote to his father, and confided to him the history of his love. He forgot the unfaithfulness of Bernerette in his letter; he spoke only of her beauty, her constancy, of the gentle obstinacy she had used to see him again; at last, of the horrible attempt which she had just made upon herself. Frédéric's father, an old man of seventy, loved his only son more than his own life. He rushed in all haste to Paris, accompanied by Mademoiselle Hombert, his sister, a very pious old maiden lady. Unfortunately, neither the worthy man nor the good aunt had the virtue of being discreet; so that, immediately upon their arrival, all their acquaintances knew that Frédéric was madly in

love with a grisette, who had poisoned herself for him. Soon it was said he wished to marry her ; the evil-disposed cried out at the scandal, at the dishonor for the family. Under pretext of defending the cause of the young man, Mademoiselle Darcy related everything which she knew with the most romantic details. In short, in desiring to stay the storm, Frédéric saw it burst upon his head from all sides. First he had to appear before his assembled relations and friends and submit to a kind of examination. Not that he was treated as a culprit ; on the contrary, he was shown every possible indulgence ; but he was obliged to lay his heart bare, and to hear his dearest secrets discussed. It is needless to say that they could decide nothing.

Monsieur Hombert wished to see Bernerette. He went to her house, talked with her for a long time, and asked her a thousand questions to which she knew how to reply with a graciousness and simplicity that touched the old man. He, like all the world, had had his youthful love-affairs. He went away, after the conversation, much troubled and very anxious. He sent for his son, and told him that he had decided to make a little sacrifice in favor of Bernerette, if she would promise to learn a trade, when she was recovered. Frederic conveyed this proposition to his love.

“ And you, what will you do ? ” she asked him.
“ Do you expect to remain or to go away ? ”

He replied that he should remain ; but this was not the opinion of his family. Upon this point Monsieur Hombert was immovable. He represented to his son the danger, the shame, the impossibility of such a tie ; in measured and kindly terms, he made him feel that he was destroying his reputation, that he was ruining his future. After having forced him to reflect, he employed the irresistible argument, which is a father's main power : he entreated his son ; the latter promised what he wished of him. So many shocks, so many different interests, had agitated him, that he did not know how to make up his mind, and seeing unhappiness upon all sides, he dared neither to fight nor to choose. Gérard himself, ordinarily firm, sought in vain for some means of safety, and saw himself compelled to say that they must let destiny do its work.

Two unexpected events suddenly changed matters. Frédéric was alone one evening in his chamber ; he saw Bernerette enter. She was pale, her hair in disorder ; a high fever made her eyes burn with a startling brilliancy ; contrary to her custom, her words were brief and imperious. She came, she said, to summon Frédéric to explain himself.

“ Do you wish to kill me ? ” she demanded of him. “ Do you love me or do you not love me ? Are you a child ? Have you need of others to act ? Are you mad to consult your father to know if you must keep your mistress ? What do these people desire ? To separate

us. If you wish as they do, you have no need of their advice ; and if you do not wish it, still less. Do you wish to go away? Take me with you. I will never learn a trade ; I cannot go on the stage again. How could I do it, as I am? I suffer too much to wait ; decide."

She spoke in this tone for nearly an hour, interrupting Frédéric whenever he wished to reply. He tried in vain to pacify her. Such a violent excitement would not yield to any reasoning. Finally, overcome with fatigue, Bernerette burst into tears. The young man pressed her in his arms ; he would not resist so much love. He bore his mistress to his bed.

"Stay there," he said to her, "and may the heavens crush me if I allow you to be torn from it! I do not wish to hear anything, to see anything, save yourself. You reproach me with my cowardice, and you are right ; but I will act, you shall see. If my father drives me away, you shall follow me ; since God has made me poor, we will live poorly. I will trouble myself neither about my name, my family, nor the future."

These words, pronounced with all the ardor of conviction, consoled Bernerette. She begged her lover to take her home on foot ; in spite of her lassitude, she wished to take the air. During the walk, they agreed upon the plan which they had to follow. Frédéric should feign to submit to his father's desires ; but he would represent to him that with a small fortune it is not possible to hazard one's self in the diplomatic career.

He would ask, therefore, to finish his law studies ; Monsieur Hombert would probably yield upon the condition that his son would forget his foolish love-affair. Bernerette, on her side, would change her place of living, and they would think she had gone away. She would hire a little chamber in the Rue de la Harpe or in the suburbs ; there she would live with such economy that Frédéric's allowance would suffice for both. As soon as his father returned to Besançon, he would join her and live with her. For the rest, God would provide. Such was the plan upon which the poor lovers decided, and whose success they believed would be infallible, as always happens in such cases.

Two days later, after a sleepless night, Frédéric went at six o'clock in the morning to his love. A conversation which he had had with his father troubled him ; he exacted that he should set out for Berne ; he came to kiss Bernerette, and to find his courage restored near her. The room was deserted, the bed was vacant. He questioned the portress, and learned beyond a doubt that he had a rival and that he was deceived.

This time he felt less sorrow than indignation. The treachery was too great for contempt not to take the place of love. As soon as he reached home, he wrote a long letter to Bernerette to overwhelm her with the most bitter reproaches.

But he tore up this letter as he was about to send it ; such a miserable creature did not appear to him to be

worthy of his anger. He resolved to go away as soon as possible ; a seat was vacant in the Strasbourg mail-coach for the next day ; he engaged it, and hastened to inform his father. The whole family congratulated him ; naturally they did not ask him by what accident he obeyed so quickly. Gérard alone knew the truth ; Mademoiselle Darcy declared that it was a pity, and that men were always lacking in affection. Mademoiselle Hombert added something from her savings to the little sum that her nephew took with him. A farewell dinner united all the family, and Frédéric set out for Switzerland.

X

The pleasures and the fatigue of the journey, the charm of the change, the occupations of his new career, soon restored tranquillity to his mind. He thought now only with horror of the fatal passion which had almost ruined him. He received a most gracious reception at the embassy ; he was well recommended ; his face was an advocate in his favor ; a natural modesty gave a greater worth to his talents, without rendering them less evident ; he soon occupied an

honorable place in society, and a most smiling future opened itself before him.

Bernerette wrote him several times. She asked him, gaily, if he had gone away for good, and if he expected to return soon. At first he abstained from replying; but as the letters continued, and became more and more pressing, at last he lost patience. He replied and unburdened his heart. He demanded of Bernerette, in the most bitter terms, if she had forgotten her double treachery, and he entreated her to spare him, in the future, her pretended protestations of which he could no longer be the dupe. He added, however, that he blessed Providence for having enlightened him in time; that his resolution was irrevocable, and that probably he would not see France again until after a long residence in other lands. This letter sent, he felt more at ease, and entirely liberated from the past. Bernerette ceased writing him from this moment, and he heard her spoken of no more.

A moderately wealthy English family inhabited a pretty house in a suburb of Berne. Frédéric was presented there; three young girls, the eldest of whom was only twenty, did the honors of the house. The eldest was remarkably beautiful; she soon noticed the lively impression she had made upon the young *attaché*, and did not show herself insensible to it. He was not, however, sufficiently cured to give himself up to another love-affair. But, after so much agitation and sorrow, he

felt the need of opening his heart to a calm and pure sentiment. The lovely Fanny did not become his confidante as Mademoiselle Darcy had been; but, without his telling her of his troubles, she divined that he had had suffering, and as the glance of her blue eyes seemed to console Frédéric, she often turned them toward him.

Good-will leads to sympathy, and sympathy to love. At the end of three months love had not come, but it was not very remote. A man with a character as loving and unreserved as Frédéric could be constant only under the condition of being confident. Gérard had been correct in telling him, formerly, that he would love Bernerette longer than he thought; but for that it was necessary that Bernerette should love him also, at least in appearance.

In shocking weak hearts, their existence is put in peril; they must be shattered or they must forget, for they have not the strength to be faithful to a memory from which they suffer. Therefore Frédéric accustomed himself, from day to day, to live only for Fanny; soon it was a question of marriage. The young man had not a large fortune; but his position was made, his patronage powerful. Love, which raises all obstacles, pleaded for him; it was decided that he should ask a favor of the French Court, and that Frédéric, nominated as second secretary, should become Fanny's husband.

That happy day arrived at last. The newly-married couple had just arisen, and Frédéric, in the intoxication of happiness, held his wife in his arms. He was seated near the fire-place; the crackling of the fire and a tongue of flame made him shudder. By a strange effect of his memory, he remembered the day when, for the first time, he had found himself thus with Bernerette, near the fire-place of a little room. I leave it to those whose imagination is pleased to admit that man foresees destiny, to comment upon this strange chance. It was just at this moment that Frédéric was handed a letter, post-marked Paris, which announced to him the death of Bernerette.

I do not need to describe his astonishment or his grief. I will content myself with placing before the eyes of the reader the adieu of that poor girl to her lover; in it will be found, in a few lines, written in a style half-gay and half-sad, which was peculiar to her, the explanation of her behavior.

“Alas! Frédéric, you knew well that it was a dream. We could not live peacefully and be happy. I wished to go away from here; I received a visit from a young man whose acquaintance I had made in the provinces in the time of my glory; he was madly in love with me at Bordeaux. I do not know where he learned my address. He came and threw himself at my feet, as if I had still been the queen of the stage. He offered me

his fortune, which was not very much, and his heart, which was nothing at all. It was the next day, my love, recall it! you had left me, repeating that you would go away. I was not over-gay, my dear, and I did not know any too well where to go for dinner. I allowed myself to be led away; unfortunately, I was not able to resist; I had sent my slippers to his rooms, but I sent to take them away, and I decided to die.

"Yes, my poor dear, I wished to leave you then. I could not live as an apprentice; nevertheless, the second time I had decided. But your father came to see me; this is something which you have not known. What did you wish that I should tell him? I promised to forget you; I returned to my adorer. Ah! how wearisome it was to me! Is it my fault if all men seem ugly and stupid to me since I have loved you? I cannot, however, live on air. What do you wish that I should do?

"I do not kill myself, my love, I end myself; it is a very insignificant murder that I commit. My health is deplorable, lost forever. That would amount to nothing were it not for the weariness. They say you are going to marry. Is she beautiful? Adieu, adieu! When the weather is fine, remember the day that you watered your plants. Ah! how quickly I loved you. On seeing you, I started, and became pallid. I have been very happy with you. Adieu!

"If your father had wished it, we should never have left one another ; but you had no money, nor had I ; that's the misfortune. If I had gone to live with a seamstress, I could not have remained there. So what would you have ? Behold ! I have made two attempts to recommence ; nothing succeeds with me.

"I assure you that it is not through madness that I wish to die ; I have my reason entirely. My parents—may God forgive them!—have again returned. If you knew what they wish to make of me ! It is too disgusting to be a plaything of misery, and to see one's self thus teased. When we were in love, if we had used more economy, that would have been better. But you wished us to go to the theatre and enjoy ourselves. We have passed happy evenings at *La Chaumière*.

"Adieu ! my dear ; for the last time, adieu ! If my health were better, I should go on to the stage again ; but I breathe, that is all. Never reproach yourself with my death. I feel that, if you had been able, nothing of all this would have happened ; I felt it myself and I dared not say it ; I have seen all this in preparation, but I did not wish to torment you.

"This is a sad night in which I write you, sadder, you may be sure, than that in which you came and found me gone away. I had never believed you jealous ; when I knew that you were angry, that gave me pain and pleasure. Why did you not wait for testimony ? You would have seen the look that I had

upon my return from my adventure ; but it's all the same,—you loved me more than you thought.

“I would like to finish, but I cannot. I hold on to this paper as to the remains of life ; I crowd my lines ; I desire to collect all the force I have and send it to you. No ; you have not known my heart. You loved me because you are kind ; you came through pity, and also a little for your pleasure. If I had been rich, you would not have left me. That is what I tell myself ; it is the only thing which gives me courage. Adieu !

“May your father never repent of the misfortune of which he has been the cause ! Now, I feel it, what would I not give to know something, to have a means of livelihood in my hands ! It is too late. If, when one is young, one could see her life in a glass, I should not end thus. You would still love me, but perhaps not, since you are going to marry.

“How could you have written me such a severe letter ? Since your father exacted it, and as you were going away, I did not think it wrong to try to take another lover. Never have I experienced the like, and never have I seen anything so droll as his face, when I declared to him that I would go home.

“Your letter made me desolate. I remained at the corner of my fire during two days, without being able to speak one word or move. I was born very unhappy, my love. You would not believe how the good God

has treated me during these wretched twenty years that I have existed; it is inconceivable. As a child, I was beaten, and when I cried, they sent me out-of-doors: 'Go and see if it rains,' said my father. When I was twelve years old, they made me polish the floors, and when I had become a woman, they persecuted me enough! My life has been passed in trying to live, and finally to see that I must die.

"May God bless you, you who have given me my only, only happy days! Then I breathed a good whiff of air. May God return it to you! May you be happy, free, oh, my love! May you be loved as you are loved by your dying, your poor Bernerette!"

"Do not distress yourself; all is coming to an end. Do you remember a German tragedy that you read to me one evening at home? The hero of the piece asks: 'What is it that we cry for in dying?' '*Liberty*,' replied little George. You wept as you read this word. Weep now; it is the last cry of your love.

"The poor die without any wills; nevertheless, I send you a curl of my hair. One day when the hair-dresser burned me with his iron, I remember that you wished to beat him. As you did not wish that any one should burn my hair, you will not throw this curl into the fire.

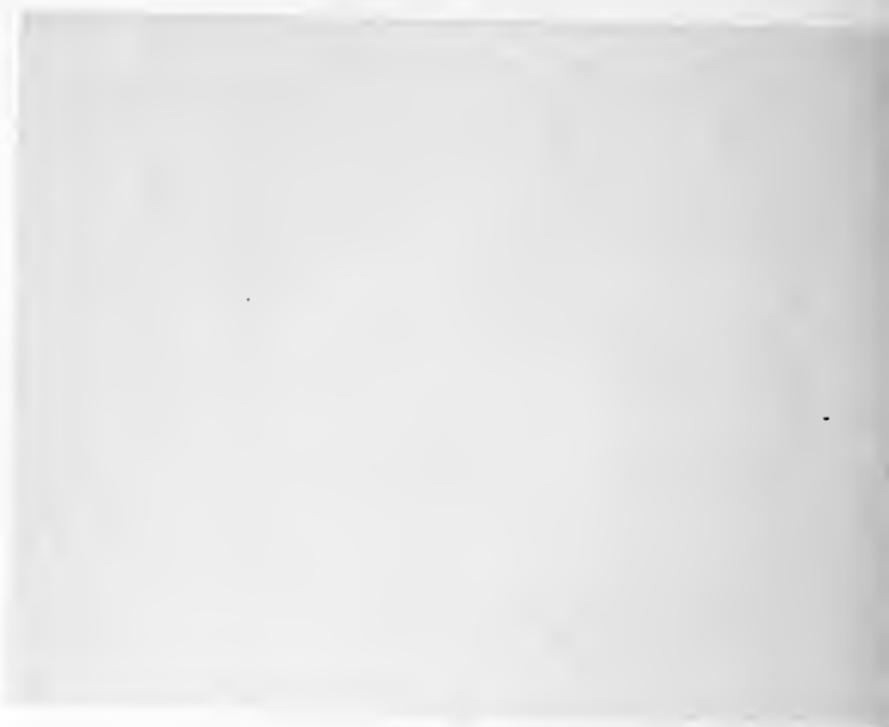
"Adieu! again adieu, forever!

"Your faithful love,

"BERNERETTE."

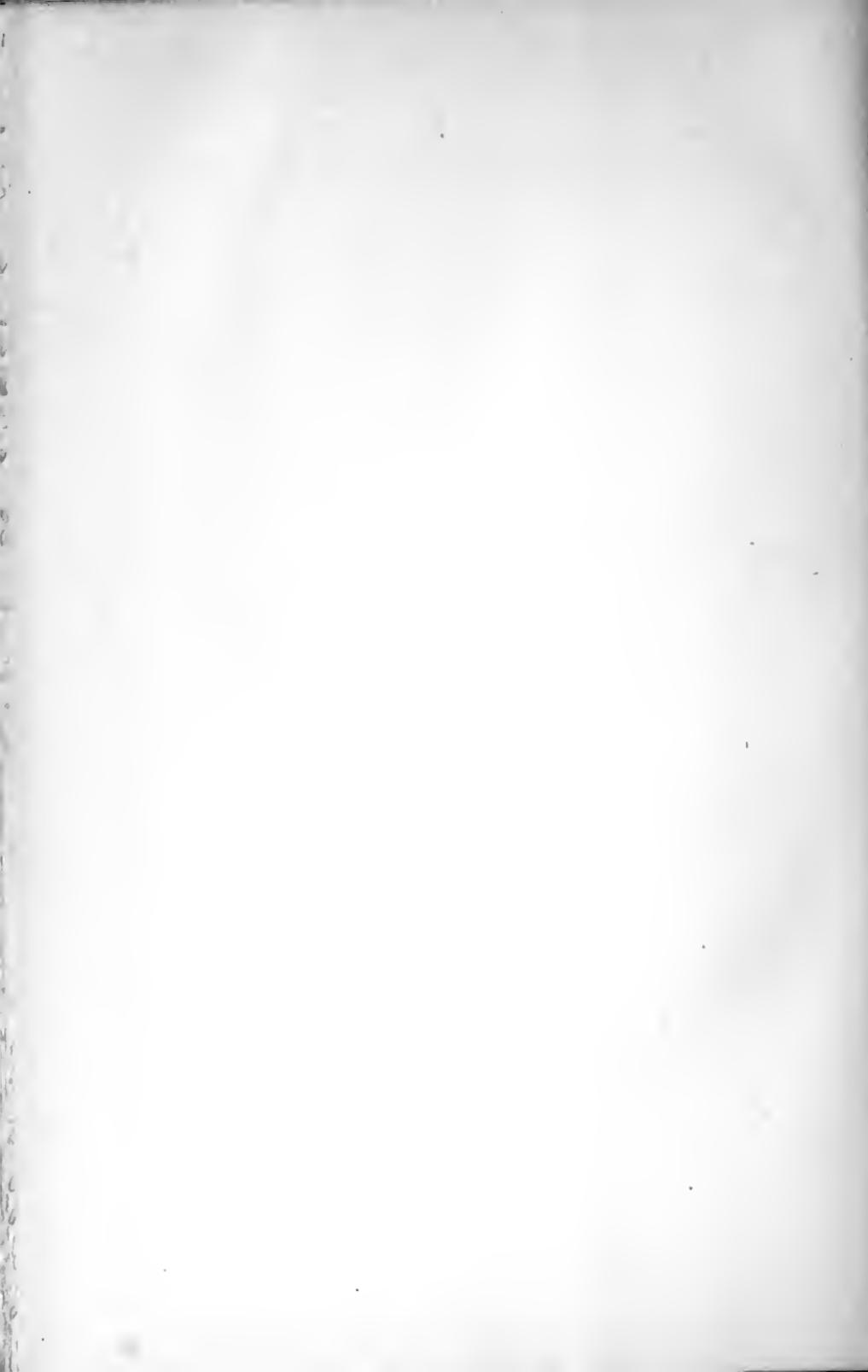
I have been told that, after having read this letter, Frédéric attempted to take his life. I will not speak of that here. Indifferent persons meet too often with ridicule for similar acts, when they survive them. The opinions of the world are deplorable on this point: they laugh at those who try to die, and those who die are forgotten.





PIERRE AND CAMILLE

1844







I

The Chevalier des Arcis, a cavalry officer, had left the service in 1760. Although he was still young, and his fortune permitted him to appear advantageously at Court, he had withdrawn himself early from the life of a bachelor and the pleasures of Paris. He retired to a pretty place in the country near Mans. After a little while, the solitude there, which had at first seemed agreeable, became oppressive. He found that it was difficult to break, all at once, the habits of youth. He did not regret having abandoned society, but he could

not accustom himself to live alone ; so he began to think of marriage, and of finding, if possible, a woman who shared his taste for the quiet and sedentary life which he had decided to lead.

He did not care for his wife to be beautiful ; nor did he wish her to be ugly ; he wanted her to have education and intelligence, with the least possible spirit. What he sought above all things was cheerfulness and an equable temperament, which he regarded as the most necessary qualities in a woman. The daughter of a retired merchant who lived in the neighborhood pleased him. As the chevalier was dependent on no one, he did not trouble about the degrees of caste which exist between a gentleman and the daughter of a merchant. He expressed his wishes to the family, which were received with enthusiasm. He paid his court to the lady for some months, and the marriage was arranged.

Never was an alliance formed under happier auspices. As the chevalier knew his wife better, he discovered in her new qualities and an unchangeable sweetness of disposition. She, on her side, had an extreme love for her husband. She lived only for him and to please him, and far from regretting the pleasures of youth which she sacrificed for him, she wished to spend her whole existence in this solitude which became more dear to her every day.

This solitude, however, was not uninterrupted. Some trips to the city, the regular visits of some friends to

them, gave them diversion from time to time. The chevalier was willing to see his wife's relations frequently, and so it hardly seemed to her that she had quitted the paternal roof. She often flew from the arms of her husband into those of her mother, and thus enjoyed a favor which Providence accords to few, for it is rare that a new happiness does not destroy an old one.

Monsieur des Arcis had no less sweetness and goodness than his wife; but the passions of his youth, and the experience which he seemed to have had with the things of this world, sometimes made him melancholy. Cécile—as Madame des Arcis was called—religiously respected those moments of sadness. Although she did not reason about this subject, her heart easily taught her not to complain of these light clouds which destroy everything if one heeds them, and which are nothing if allowed to pass.

Cécile's family was composed of good, honest people,—merchants who had realized their money by work, and to whom old age was, so to speak, a perpetual Sunday. The chevalier liked this happiness of rest bought by labor, and took part in it voluntarily. Fatigued by the manners of Versailles, and even by the suppers of Mademoiselle Quinault, this lack of formality, a little rough, but frank and novel to him, pleased him. Cécile had an uncle, an excellent man and a still better guest, whose name was Giraud. He had been a master-mason; then, little by little, he had become an architect; and with it

all he had gained an income of twenty thousand francs. The chevalier's house was very much to his taste, and he was always well received there, although he arrived covered with plaster and dust ; for, in spite of his years and his twenty thousand francs, he could not resist climbing on roofs and handling trowels. When he had drunk several glasses of champagne, he made this peroration at dessert : " You are a happy man, my nephew," he often said to the chevalier. " You are rich, young ; you have a good little wife, a well-built house ; you lack nothing ; there is nothing more to say ; so much the worse for your neighbor if he envies you. I say, and I repeat, that you are a happy man."

One day, Cécile, hearing these words, approached her husband, saying :

" There must be some truth in what he says to you, since you allow him to say it to your face ? "

Madame des Arcis, after awhile, became aware that she was *enceinte*. There was behind the house a little hill from which one could see all the country around. The couple often walked there together. One evening, when they were seated there upon the grass :

" You did not contradict my uncle the other day," said Cécile. " Do you think, however, that he was altogether right ? Are you perfectly happy ? "

" As much so as a man can be," replied the chevalier ; " and I do not see how anything could add to my happiness."

"Then I am more ambitious than you," replied Cécile, "for it would be very easy for me to mention something which we lack here, and which is absolutely necessary."

The chevalier thought she meant some trifle, and that she was making a detour in order to confide to him some feminine caprice. He made, in fun, a thousand guesses, and at each question Cécile's laughter increased. Jesting thus, they got up and descended the hill. Monsieur des Arcis quickened his steps, and, encouraged by the rapid slope, he was going to drag his wife along, when she stopped him and leaned against his shoulder.

"Take care, my dear," she said to him, "do not make me walk so fast. You sought a long way off for what I asked you: we have it here under my apron."

Nearly all their conversations after that were on this one subject; they spoke only of their child, of the care they would give it, of the way in which they would bring it up, and of the projects formed already for its future. The chevalier wanted his wife to take all possible precautions to preserve the treasure she carried. He redoubled his loving attentions for her, and all the time, before the birth, was for Cécile only a long and delicious intoxication full of the sweetest hopes.

At length the time fixed by nature arrived, and a child as beautiful as the day came into the world. It was a girl, and they called her Camille. In spite of

general custom, and even contrary to the advice of the doctors, Cécile wanted to nurse her herself. Her maternal pride was so flattered by the beauty of her daughter that it was impossible to be separated from her. It is true that there had rarely been seen a newly-born infant with features as regular and as remarkable. Her eyes, above all, shone with extraordinary brilliancy as soon as they opened to the light. Cécile, who had been reared in a convent, was extremely pious. Her first step, when she was able to get up, was to go to church to render thanks to God.

The child commenced to strengthen and develop. As she grew, they were surprised to notice that she kept strangely still. No noise seemed to strike her: she was insensible to the thousand pretty speeches which mothers address to their nurslings; and when any one sang while rocking her, she kept her eyes fixed and open, eagerly watching the light of the lamp and appearing to hear nothing. One day, when she was asleep, a servant overturned a piece of furniture; the mother ran quickly, and was astonished to see that the child was not awakened. The chevalier was frightened by these indications, too clear for one to be deceived. When he had carefully observed them, he understood to what misfortune his daughter was condemned. The mother wished in vain to disbelieve, and to turn away her husband's fears by all imaginable means. The doctor was called in, and the examination was neither

long nor difficult. They recognized that poor little Camille was deprived of hearing, and consequently of speech.

II

The first thought of the mother was to ask if the evil was without remedy, and they replied that there had been some cures. During a year, in spite of appearances, she preserved some hope, but all the resources of art failed, and after having exhausted them, they had to renounce hope.

Unfortunately, at this epoch, in which many prejudices had been destroyed and replaced, there existed a merciless prejudice against those poor creatures known as deaf-mutes. Noble souls, distinguished savants, or even men actuated by sentiments of charity, had, it is true, protested for a long time against this barbarity. It was a curious thing that it was a Spanish monk who first tried, in the sixteenth century, to teach deaf-mutes to speak without words ; a task then believed impossible. His example was followed in Italy, England, and France at different times. Bonnet, Wallis, Bulwer, and Van Helmont had written important works on the subject, but their intention was better than the results ; a little

good had been done here and there unknown to the world, almost by chance, without any real success. Everywhere, even at Paris, in the bosom of the most advanced civilization, deaf-mutes were regarded as a kind of beings apart, marked by the seal of the celestial wrath. Deprived of speech, they believed them deprived also of thought. The cloister for those who were born rich, the poor were left to shift for themselves; such was their lot. They inspired more horror than pity.

The chevalier, little by little, fell into the most profound melancholy. He spent the greater part of the day shut up in his study or walking alone in the woods. He forced himself, when he saw his wife, to present a peaceful expression and tried to console her, but in vain. Madame des Arcis, on her side, was not less sad. A merited misfortune may make the tears flow, almost always too late and so useless; but a misfortune without motive overwhelms reason and discourages piety.

These two newly-married people, made to love, and who loved each other, commenced thus to see each other with pain and to avoid meeting in the same walks where they had so recently spoken of a hope, so near, so peaceful, and so pure. The chevalier, in exiling himself to a house in the country, had thought only to gain quiet; and happiness had seemed to surprise him there. Madame des Arcis had only made a marriage of convenience, and love had come and was reciprocated. A

terrible obstacle placed itself, all at once, between them, and this obstacle was precisely the same which ought to have been their most sacred tie.

That which caused this sudden and tacit separation, more horrible than a divorce, more cruel than a slow death, was that the mother, in spite of its misfortune, loved her child passionately; while the chevalier, however much he wished to do it, in spite of his patience and his goodness, could not conquer the horror that this malediction of God fallen upon him inspired.

“Can I, then, hate my child?” he often asked himself during his solitary walks. “Is it her fault if the wrath of Heaven has stricken her? Ought I not only to pity her; try to lighten this grief for my wife, conceal what I suffer, and watch over my child? To what a sad existence she is destined if I, her father, abandon her? What will become of her? God sent her to me thus; it is for me to be resigned. Who would take care of her? Who would bring her up? Who would protect her? In all the world she has only her mother and me; she will never find a husband, and she will never have a brother or sister. One affected child is enough. Unless I am utterly heartless, I ought to consecrate my life to helping her to bear hers.”

After these thoughts, the chevalier went back to the house with the firm intention of fulfilling his duties of father and husband. He found his child in his wife’s arms, and he knelt before them, taking Cécile’s hand in

his. Some one had told him, he said, of a celebrated physician, whom he was going to call in ; nothing had yet been decided ; he had heard of wonderful cures. In speaking thus, he took his daughter in his arms, and walked about the room ; but the most frightful thoughts seized him in spite of himself ; the idea of the future, the sight of this silence, of this unfinished being, whose senses were closed, the reprobation, the pity, the disgust, the scorn of the world, overcame him. His face paled, his hands trembled ; he gave the child back to the mother, and turned away to conceal his tears.

It was in moments like these that Madame des Arcis hugged her daughter to her heart with a sort of tender desperation. Her eyes filled with maternal love, the strongest and most confiding of all love. No one ever heard her complain ; she retired to her room, put Camille in her cradle, and passed whole hours, mute like her, gazing at her.

This sort of sombre and passionate exaltation became so strong, that it was not rare to see Madame des Arcis preserve the most absolute silence for days together, and it was in vain that one spoke to her. It seemed that she wished to experience this blank of mind in which her child dwelt.

She spoke by signs to her child, and she alone could understand her. The other persons of the household, including the chevalier, were as strangers to Camille.

Madame des Arcis's mother, a woman with a vulgar mind, hardly ever came to Chardonneux—as the estate of the chevalier was called—without deplored the misfortune which had come to her son-in-law and his dear Cécile. Trying to prove her sympathy, she unceasingly pitied the sad lot of this poor child, and one day she even said :

“It would have been better if she had never been born.”

“What would you have done, then, if I had been thus?” replied Cécile almost angrily.

Uncle Giraud, the master-mason, pretended not to regard it as a great misfortune that his little niece was dumb.

“I have had,” he said, “such a garrulous wife, that I consider anything else in the world, no matter what, preferable. That little one there is sure never to gossip, nor to listen to it, nor to weary a whole household singing old opera airs, which are all on a par; she will never quarrel; she will never dispute with the servants, as my wife never failed to do; she will not wake up if her husband coughs, or if he gets up early to overlook his workmen. She will not talk in her sleep, she will be quiet. She will see clearly: deaf people always have good eyes. She will be able to settle an account; she can only count on her fingers, and pay, if she have the money, but without talking so much about it as the owners do about the least

building. She will understand a very good thing which is learned ordinarily with great difficulty,—that it is better to do than to talk ; and if her heart is in the right place, people will know it without her having to put honey on the end of her tongue. She will not laugh in company, it is true ; but she will not hear the bore at dinner when he makes a flighty speech ; she will be pretty, she will be intelligent, and she will not make a noise, and she will not be compelled, like the blind, to have a small dog to lead her when walking. My faith ! if I was young I would marry her quickly enough, when she is big enough ; and now that I am old and without children, I will be glad to take her home with me as my daughter if, perchance, you get tired of her."

When Uncle Giraud spoke in this way, a little gaiety reappeared for the time between Monsieur des Arcis and his wife. They could not help smiling at this good-natured man. If a little blunt, he was respectable and, above all, kind-hearted ; and he did not like to see trouble anywhere. But the evil was there ; all the rest of the family regarded with frightened and curious eyes this uncommon misfortune. When they came in a calash from the ford of Mauny, these good people arranged themselves in a circle before dinner, trying to understand and reason, examining into everything with an air of interest but with composed faces ; consulting together in a low tone as to what to say, and sometimes trying to turn the common thought by a vulgar remark on some

trifle. The mother remained before them, her child upon her lap, her breast uncovered, from which the abundant milk still flowed. If Raphael had been of the family, the Madonna of the Chair would have been a sister, for Madame des Arcis was even more beautiful than she.

III

The little girl grew rapidly ; nature sadly but faithfully fulfilled her task. Camille had only her eyes at the service of her soul. Her first gestures, as her first gaze, had been directed toward the light. The palest ray of sunlight gave her transports of joy.

When she began to stand alone and walk, a very marked curiosity made her touch and examine all the objects around her with a delicacy, mingled with fear and pleasure, which had the vivacity of the child and already the modesty of the woman. Her first movement was to run toward anything new and take possession of it, but she almost always turned half-way, looking at her mother as if to consult her. She resembled then an ermine, which, they say, will stop and renounce its course, if it sees that, in following it, a little dirt or gravel might soil its fur.

Some children in the neighborhood came to play with Camille in the garden. The way in which she watched them speak was strange to see. These children, about her own age, tried naturally to repeat the words bungled by their nurses, and tried, by opening their lips and making a great deal of noise, to make her understand, but it was only a movement to the poor girl. Often to prove that she had understood, she would stretch out her hands toward her little companions, who, on their side, would gather together frightened at this different expression of their own thought.

Madame des Arcis never left her child. She observed with anxiety the least action, the least sign of life in Camille. If she had been able to divine that the Abbé de l'Épée would soon come and bring light into this world of shadows, what would have been her joy! But she could do nothing, and remained powerless against this evil of chance, which the courage and piety of a man was going to destroy. It is singular that a priest saw more than a mother, and that the mind which discerned, found that which was lacking to the heart which suffered.

When Camille's little friends were old enough to receive their first instructions from a governess, the poor child commenced to show a great sadness because the same was not done for her as for the others. There was at a neighbor's house an old English teacher who had great trouble teaching a child to spell, and ended by

treating her severely. Camille, who was present during the lesson, looked at her little comrade with astonishment, following her efforts with her eyes, and trying, so to speak, to aid her ; then cried with her when she was scolded.

The music lessons gave her still more pain. Standing by the piano, she stiffened and worked her fingers, watching the mistress with her great eyes, which were dark and very beautiful. She seemed to ask what she was doing, and sometimes struck on the keys in a gentle and at the same time irritated fashion.

The impression which people or exterior objects produced upon other children did not seem to surprise her. She observed and remembered things like them. But when she saw them show each other these same objects, and exchange between them that movement of the lips which was unintelligible, then her trouble recommenced. She went off in a corner, and traced almost mechanically upon the sand, with a stone or piece of wood, some big letters which she had seen others spell and these she studied attentively.

The evening-prayer, which the neighbors made their children say regularly every day, was an enigma which resembled a mystery for Camille. She knelt with her friends and joined her hands without knowing why. The chevalier thought this a profanation :

“Take that child away,” he said ; “spare me at least that mockery.”

"I take it upon myself to ask God's pardon for it," said the mother one day.

Camille early gave signs of that curious faculty which the Scotch call second sight, which the partisans of magnetism wish to have recognized, and which the doctors generally place under the head of diseases. The little deaf-mute felt the presence of those she loved, and often went to meet them when nothing had occurred to indicate their approach.

Not only did other children approach her with a certain fear, but they avoided her sometimes with an air of scorn. It happened that one of them, with that lack of compassion of which La Fontaine speaks, spoke to her for a long time, laughing in her face, and asking her to answer. When these groups of children danced, as they will as long as they have their little legs, Camille, already a half-grown girl, stood watching them; and when they came to the refrain :

"Enter in the dance,
See how they dance ——"

she alone, in a corner, leaning against a bench, followed the measure, balancing her pretty head, without trying to mix in the groups, but with a sadness and gentleness which would make any one pity her.

One of the greatest tasks that this unfortunate soul tried to accomplish was to count with a little neighbor

who was learning arithmetic. It was a very easy and short calculation. The little neighbor struggled against several ciphers, much perplexed. The total did not amount to more than twelve or fifteen, which the child counted on her fingers. Camille, understanding that it was wrong, and wishing to aid her, extended her two open hands. They had given even to her the first and the simplest ideas; she knew that two and two make four. An intelligent animal, even a bird, counts in some fashion, which we do not understand, up to two or three. A magpie, they say, has even counted five. Camille, then, ought to have been able to count still further. Her hands could go only to ten. She held them open before her little friend with an air so full of good-will that one would have taken her for an honest man who could not pay his debts.

Coquetry shows itself early in women: Camille gave no indication of it.

“It is, however, strange,” said the chevalier, “that a little girl does not understand a bonnet!”

To such a remark Madame des Arcis would smile sadly.

“She is so beautiful, though!” said she to her husband, and at the same time she pushed her gently to make her walk before her father that he might see her form, which began to be womanly, and her still child-like gait, which was so charming.

As she advanced in age, Camille formed a passion, not for religion, which she did not understand, but for

the churches, which she saw. Perhaps she had in her soul that invincible instinct which makes a child of ten years conceive and retain the desire to put on a woollen dress, to seek out those who are poor and who suffer, and to pass a whole life thus. Many indifferent persons, and even philosophers, would die without being able to explain such a fancy ; but it exists, nevertheless.

“When I was a child, I did not see God, I saw only the heavens,” is certainly a sublime idea, written, as we know, by a deaf-mute. Camille was a long way off from so much feeling. A crudely-colored plaster-of-paris image of the Virgin against a blue stuccoed background, like a shop-sign ; a choir-boy of the province, whose old surplice covered his cassock, and whose faint, silvery voice made the window-panes vibrate sadly without, of which Camille could have heard nothing ; the walk of the beadle ; the airs of the verger—who can tell what makes a child lift up its eyes ? But what does it matter so long as the eyes are lifted up ?

IV

“Nevertheless, she is beautiful !” the chevalier repeated, and, indeed, Camille was beautiful. In the perfect oval of a regular face, under features of wonderful

freshness and purity, shone, so to speak, the light of a good heart. Camille was small, not very pale, but fair, with long black hair. Gay and active, she followed her natural bent; gently sad, and almost indifferent to the misfortune which she bore; full of grace in all her movements, clever and energetic in her little pantomime, singularly industrious in making herself understood, quick to understand, and always obedient as soon as she comprehended. The chevalier, like Madame des Arcis, remained sometimes regarding his daughter without speaking. So much grace and beauty joined to such misfortune and horror almost unhinged his mind. He often embraced Camille with a sort of transport, saying in a loud voice: "I am not such a wicked man!"

There was a walk in the woods, at the bottom of the garden, where the chevalier was in the habit of walking after breakfast. From the window of her room Madame des Arcis saw her husband come and go behind the trees. She did not dare to join him there. She watched with bitter sorrow this man who had been her lover rather than her husband, from whom she had never received an unkind word, and to whom she had never a single reproach to make, and who had no longer the courage to love her because she was a mother.

However, one morning she risked it. She came down in a dressing-sack, looking as beautiful as an angel, her heart beating and all excitement over a children's ball which was to be given in a neighboring castle. Madame

des Arcis wished to take Camille there. She wished to see what effect her beauty would produce on the world and on her father. She had spent nights, without sleep, deciding what gown she should wear, and she had formed the sweetest hopes about this project. It must be arranged that he should be proud, and that they should be jealous of that poor little one, once for all.

“She will say nothing, but she will be the most beautiful.”

When the chevalier saw his wife approach him, he went to meet her, took her hand, and kissed it with a respectful gallantry which he acquired at Versailles and which never left him in spite of his natural good-comradeship. They commenced by exchanging some insignificant words, and then walked on side by side.

Madame des Arcis was determining in what manner she would propose to her husband to allow her to take her daughter to the ball, and thus break a rule he had formed since Camille’s birth, of never going into society. Merely the thought of exposing his misfortune to the eyes of the indifferent or the malicious made the chevalier almost beside himself. He had formally announced his wish on this subject. It was necessary, then, for Madame des Arcis to find an expedient, any pretext, not only to execute her design, but even to speak of it.

However, during this time, the chevalier appeared to be deeply reflecting. He was the first to break the

silence. An unlooked-for business affair of one of his relatives, he told his wife, had just occasioned great derangements of fortune in his family ; it was important for him to overlook the people in charge ; his interests, and in consequence those of Madame des Arcis herself, were in danger of being compromised unless care was taken. In short, he announced that he was obliged to make a short trip to Holland, where he would have an understanding with his banker ; he added that the affair was extremely pressing, and that he had decided to leave the next morning.

It was only too easy for Madame des Arcis to understand the motive of this journey. The chevalier was far from thinking of abandoning his wife ; but, in spite of himself, he experienced an irresistible desire to isolate himself entirely for a time in order to become more resigned. All true sorrow, in most cases, demands solitude for man, just as physical suffering does in the case of the lower animals.

Madame des Arcis was at first so much surprised that she could not reply except by those trifling expressions which we always have at hand when we do not wish to betray our thoughts : this journey was very natural ; the chevalier was right, she recognized the importance of this affair, and opposed it in no way. While she was speaking, her heart was a prey to sorrow ; she said that she felt weak, and sat down on a bench.

There she sat, buried in deep thought, her eyes fixed, and her hands hanging listlessly. Until now, Madame des Arcis had experienced neither great joy nor great sorrow. Without being a woman of elevated mind, she felt very strongly, and she was of sufficiently mediocre family to have known what suffering was. Her marriage had been an unlooked-for happiness for her, entirely new in her experience. A light had glittered before her eyes in the midst of long, cold days, and now the night had seized her.

She remained a long time thoughtful. The chevalier turned away his eyes, and seemed impatient to go back to the house. He arose and again seated himself. Madame des Arcis finally got up also, and, taking her husband's arm, they returned to the house together.

The dinner-hour came, and Madame des Arcis sent word that she was feeling ill and would not go down. In her chamber was her *Prie-Dieu*, and she remained on her knees there until evening. Her maid went in several times, having received orders from the chevalier to watch over her mistress, who did not reply when spoken to. About eight o'clock she rang, asked for her daughter's dress, ordered in advance, and requested that the horse be harnessed to the carriage. At the same time, she sent a message to the chevalier that she was going to the ball, and that she hoped he would accompany her.

Camille had the figure of a child, but most graceful and light. Upon this dearly-loved body, where womanly lines already began to be rounded, the mother placed a simple, fresh dress of white embroidered muslin, little white satin shoes, and put a necklace of American beads around her neck, and a crown of corn-flowers on her head. Such was the attire of Camille, which she donned with pride, and she leaped with joy. The mother, dressed in a velvet robe, as she did not intend to dance, was holding her child before the mirror, and had kissed her many times, repeating: "You are beautiful, you are beautiful!" when the chevalier came in. Madame des Arcis, with no apparent emotion, asked the servant if the carriage was ready, and inquired of her husband if he were going. The chevalier gave his hand to his wife, and they went to the ball.

It was the first time that any one had seen Camille, although she had been much talked about. Curiosity directed all eyes toward the little girl when she appeared. They expected that Madame des Arcis would display some embarrassment or nervousness, but she showed none. After the customary exchange of polite speeches, she seated herself with an air of calmness, and while every one watched her child with a kind of astonishment, or an air of affected interest, she left her to wander about the room without appearing to think of her.

Camille again found her little companions there, and she ran first to one and then to another, as if she had

been in the garden at home. They all, however, received her with coldness and reserve. The chevalier, standing alone in a corner, suffered visibly. His friends came to him and praised the beauty of his daughter; strangers, even persons that he did not know, approached him with the intention of complimenting him. He felt that they were consoling him, and that was little to his taste. However, a look, which did not deceive him, the look of every one, reassured him, and little by little gave him some pleasure. After having spoken by gestures to almost every one, Camille remained standing between the knees of her mother. They had just seen her moving from side to side; they looked for something unusual, or, at least, curious; but she had only said "good-evening" by a respectful bow, given a little hand-shake to the English girls, sent kisses to the mothers of her little friends, all, perhaps, learned by heart, but effected with grace and *naïveté*. When she returned quietly to her place, they commenced to admire her. Nothing indeed could have been more beautiful than this envelope in which this poor soul was imprisoned. Her form, her face, her long curling hair, and, above all, her eyes of incomparable brilliancy, surprised every one. At the same time that her glances tried to divine everything, and her gestures said everything, there was a pensive and melancholy air about her which lent to her least movement and her childish ways and poses, a certain aspect of grandeur

which a painter or sculptor would have been struck with at once. They approached Madame des Arcis, surrounded her, and asked a thousand questions of Camille by gestures. A sincere good-will and frank sympathy had succeeded to their astonishment and repugnance. Exaggeration soon followed, as always happens when a report goes from mouth to mouth. They had never seen such a charming child ; she resembled no one, and no one was ever so beautiful as she. Camille had, in fact, a complete triumph which she was far from understanding.

Madame des Arcis understood it. Always outwardly calm, she had experienced that night the purest and happiest emotions of her life. There had been a smile exchanged between her and her husband which was worth more than tears.

In the meantime, a young girl sat down at the piano and played a country dance. The children joined hands and took their places and commenced to execute the steps they had learned from their dancing-masters. The parents, on their side, commenced to exchange compliments, to speak of the beauty of the *fête*, and to remark to each other on the charms of their offspring. Soon there was a great noise of childish laughter, of jests between the young people, gossip about dress among the young girls, prating among the papas, bitter-sweet polite speeches between the mammas,—in short, a children's ball in the province.

The chevalier's glance never left his daughter, who naturally was not among the dancers. Camille looked on at the *fête* with a sad attention. A little boy came and invited her to dance. For all answer she shook her head; some flowers fell from her wreath, which was not firmly attached. Madame des Arcis picked them up, and with several pins soon repaired the disorder of the headdress, which she herself had made, but she sought in vain for her husband: he was not in the hall. She asked if he had gone and if he had taken the carriage. They replied that he had gone home on foot.

V

The chevalier had decided to steal away without saying good-bye to his wife. He was afraid and avoided all annoying explanation; besides, as his design was to return in a short time, he believed that he acted more wisely in leaving only a letter. It was not altogether true that business called him to Holland; however, his trip might be advantageous. One of his friends wrote to Chardonneux in order to urge his departure; this was an arranged pretext. On reaching home, he acted

the part of a man compelled to go away at short notice. He ordered his trunks packed in great haste and sent them to the village, mounted his horse, and set out.

An involuntary hesitation and a very real regret seized him, however, when he had crossed the threshold of his door. He feared that he had obeyed too quickly a sentiment that he ought to have mastered, that he would cause his wife useless tears, and would not find elsewhere the peace which he perhaps carried away from his house ! "But who knows," he thought, "if, on the contrary, I am not doing a useful and reasonable thing? Who knows if the transient trouble which my absence causes may not render our days more happy! I am crushed under a misfortune of which God alone knows the cause; and I separate myself for some days from the place of my suffering. The change, the journey, even the fatigue, will perhaps calm my sorrow; I go to occupy myself with material things, important, necessary; I shall return with a more tranquil and contented heart; I shall have reflected, I shall know better what I have to do. However, Cécile is going to suffer," he said, at the bottom of his heart.

But once his mind was made up, he continued his course.

Madame des Arcis left the ball about eleven o'clock. She was seated in her carriage with her daughter, who soon fell asleep upon her knees. Although she was

unaware that the chevalier had so promptly commenced his proposed journey, she, none the less, suffered from having had to take leave of her neighbors alone. What to the eyes of the world is only a lack of regard, becomes a real grief to one who suspects the motive. The chevalier had not been able to bear the public spectacle of his misfortune. The mother had wished to show this misfortune in order to endeavor to conquer it, to get dominion over it. She could have easily pardoned her husband his sadness or bad humor, but remember, that in the provinces such a manner of leaving one's wife and child is a thing almost unheard of; and the least trifle in such a case, even the searching for a cloak when the one who ought to bring it is not there, has sometimes made more trouble than a respect for all the conventionalities can rectify.

While the carriage dragged slowly over the stony, newly-made road, Madame des Arcis looked at her sleeping child and gave herself up to the saddest presentiments. Holding Camille in a way that the jolting might not awaken her, she dreamed, with that power which night gives to thought, of the fatality which seemed to follow her even in this legitimate pleasure which she had just experienced at this ball. A strange fancy of mind carried her thoughts, in turn, back over her own past, and over the future of her daughter. "What is going to happen?" she asked herself. "My husband separates himself from me; if he does not go

away to-day forever, then he will to-morrow; all my efforts, all my prayers, serve only to importune him; his love is dead, his pity remains, but his grief is stronger than he or I myself. My child is beautiful; but, consecrated to misfortune, what can I do about it? what can I foresee or prevent? If I attach myself to this poor child as I ought to do, and as I do, I must almost renounce my husband. He flees from us, we are horrors to him. If, on the contrary, I try to approach him, if I dare to try to recall his old love for me, will he not, perhaps, demand that I separate from my daughter? Will he not wish to confide Camille to strangers and deliver himself from a sight which afflicts him?"

While thus speaking to herself, Madame des Arcis embraced Camille.

"Poor child!" she said; "I abandon you! I buy at the price of your peace, your life perhaps, the appearance of a happiness which would, in its turn, flee from me! To cease to be a mother in order to be a wife! If such a thing is possible, is it not better to die than think of it?"

Then she fell back on her conjectures: "What is going to happen?" she asked herself again. "What will Providence ordain? God watches over all, He sees us as others. What will He do for us? what will become of this child?"

At some distance from Chardonneux, there was a ford to pass. It had rained a great deal for almost a month

past, which caused the river to overflow, and cover the fields round about. The ferry-man at first refused to take the carriage in his ferry-boat, and said that they would have to unhitch, as he would only take the responsibility of the people and the horse without the carriage. Madame des Arcis, in a hurry to see her husband again, did not wish to get out. She told the coachman to drive onto the ferry-boat; it was only a transit of a few minutes, and she had made it a hundred times.

In the middle of the ford the boat commenced to drift, forced by the current. The ferry-man asked the assistance of the coachman to prevent, he said, going into the sluice. There was, in fact, two or three hundred feet lower down, a mill with a sluice made with beams, piles, and planks gathered together, but old, broken by the water, and become a sort of cascade or, rather, precipice. It was clear that, if allowed to drift there, they might expect a terrible accident.

The coachman got down from his seat, wishing to be of use, but there was only a pole in the ferry-boat. The ferry-man, on his side, did what he could; but the night was dark, a fine rain blinded the two men, who relieved each other; soon they united their strength to cut through the water and gain the bank.

As the noise of the sluice grew louder, the danger became more frightful. The boat, heavily laden and

defended against the current by two vigorous men, did not go fast. When the pole was well forced in, and held in place in front, the boat stopped, veered to one side or turned around; but the current was too strong. Madame des Arcis, who had remained in the carriage with the child, opened the window in frightful terror.

“Are we lost?” she cried. At this moment the pole broke. The two men fell in the boat exhausted, their hands bruised.

The ferry-man knew how to swim, but the coachman did not. There was no time to lose.

“Father Georgeot,” said Madame des Arcis to the ferry-man,—that was his name,—“can you save us, my child and me?”

Father Georgeot glanced at the water, then at the bank.

“Certainly,” he replied, shrugging his shoulders with an offended air at such a question being addressed to him.

“What must I do?” said Madame des Arcis.

“Put yourself upon my shoulders,” replied the ferry-man. “Keep on your dress, as that will hold you up. Clasp my neck with your two arms, but do not be afraid, nor cling too tightly, or we shall be drowned; do not scream, as that will make you swallow water. As for the little one, I will take her in one hand by the waist, I will swim to the barge-man, and pass her in the

air to him without getting her wet. It is only twenty-five fathoms from here to the potatoes in that field there."

"And Jean?" said Madame des Arcis, meaning the coachman.

"Jean will drink some water, but he will come out all right. Let him go to the sluice and wait there. I will come back for him."

Father Georgeot struck out into the water, charged with his double burden, but he had over-estimated his strength. He was no longer young; far from it. The bank was farther than he said, and the current stronger than he thought. He did all that he could, however, to reach the shore, but he was soon drawn down. The trunk of a willow covered by the water, and which he had not seen in the darkness, stopped him all at once; he had been violently struck on the forehead. The blood streamed and his sight was obscured.

"Take the child and put her upon my neck or upon yours," he said; "I can do no more."

"Could you save her if you carried only her?" asked the mother.

"I do not know, but I think that I could," said the ferry-man.

Madame des Arcis did not speak, but unclasped her arms, released the ferry-man's neck, and sank to the bottom of the water.

When the ferry-man had placed the little Camille safe and sound on dry ground, the coachman, who had been taken from the river by a peasant, helped him to search for the body of Madame des Arcis. They only found her the next morning, near the shore.

VI

One year after this event, in a furnished room of a hotel, situated in the Rue du Bouloi, in Paris, in the Quartier des Diligences, a young girl in mourning was seated near a table in the chimney-corner. Upon the table was a bottle of ordinary wine, half empty, and a glass. A man, bent by age, but of an open and frank physiognomy, dressed almost like a workman, walked up and down the room. From time to time he approached the young girl, stopped before her, and looked at her with an almost paternal air. The young girl then extended her arm, raised the bottle with an eagerness mixed with a sort of involuntary repugnance, and re-filled the glass. The old man drank a little, then continued his walk, gesticulating all the time in a queer and almost ridiculous way, while the young girl, smiling sadly, followed his movements with attention.

It would have been difficult to one who found them thus, to divine what these two people were: the one immobile, cold as marble, but full of grace and distinction, expressing, in her face and least gesture, more than what is ordinarily called beauty; the other of an entirely vulgar appearance, his clothes in disorder, his hat on his head, drinking the common wine of a public-house, and making the nails of his rough shoes resound on the waxed floor. It was a strange contrast.

These two persons were, however, united by ties of tender friendship. It was Camille and Uncle Giraud. The worthy man had come to Chardonney when Madame des Arcis had been brought first to the church, then to her last resting-place. Her mother being dead and her father absent, the poor child found herself absolutely alone in the world. The chevalier, having once left his home, distracted by his journey, called by business, and obliged to visit several cities in Holland, had only learned very late of the death of his wife; indeed, a whole month passed, during which Camille was practically an orphan. It is true that there was at the house a sort of governess, whose duty it was to watch over the young girl; but the mother, while living, would not share her daughter with any one. This situation had been a sinecure; the governess hardly knew Camille, and could give her no sort of help under the circumstances.

The young girl's grief at the death of her mother was so violent that for a long time they feared for her life. When the body of Madame des Arcis had been taken from the water and brought to the house, Camille accompanied this funeral cortège, uttering such heart-rending cries of despair that the country people were almost afraid of her. There was, indeed, something frightful in this being, whom they were accustomed to see mute, sweet, and tranquil, suddenly come out of her silence in the presence of death. The inarticulate sounds which escaped from her lips, and which she alone did not hear, had something of the savage in them ; they were neither words nor sobs, but a sort of horrible language which seemed invented by her grief. During a day and a night these frightful cries did not cease to fill the house ; Camille ran about, tearing her hair and striking the walls. They tried in vain to stop her, even force was useless. It was only exhausted nature which at last made her fall at the foot of the bed where her mother's body lay.

Almost as suddenly she had seemed to regain her accustomed tranquillity and, so to speak, to forget everything. She remained some time in apparent calm, walking all day with slow and heedless step, refusing no care that they took for her ; they thought she had come to herself, and the doctor who had been called in was deceived like every one else ; but a nervous fever soon declared itself with alarming symptoms. It was necessary

to watch constantly over the invalid; her reason seemed entirely lost.

It was then that her Uncle Giraud had formed the resolution to come at all hazard to the succor of his niece.

“Since, for the time being, she has neither father nor mother,” he said to the people of the house, “I declare myself her real uncle and charge myself with the care of her to prevent any misfortune befalling her. This child has always pleased me; indeed, I have often asked her father to give her to me to brighten my life. I do not wish to deprive him of her, she is his child, but for the moment I am going to take possession of her. When he returns, I will give her up to him faithfully.”

Uncle Giraud had no great faith in doctors, for the very good reason that he did not believe in sickness, never having been ill himself. A nervous fever, above all, appeared to him a chimera, a pure derangement of ideas, that a little distraction would soon cure. It was thus that he decided to take Camille to Paris. “You see,” he said again, “that child has had a great sorrow. She did nothing but weep, and she was right; a mother does not die twice. But it does not follow that the girl must go away because the other had just gone; it was important to make her think of other things. They say that Paris is very good for that; I do not know Paris myself, neither does she; therefore I am going to take her there, that will do us both good.

Besides, if there were only the journey, it would be good for her. I have had my troubles, like other people, and every time I have seen the queue of a postilion bobbing before me, it has brightened me up."

In this way, Camille and her uncle had come to Paris. The chevalier, informed of this trip by a letter from Uncle Giraud, had approved it. On his return from Holland, he had brought back to Chardonneux such profound melancholy that it was almost impossible for him to see any one, even his daughter. He seemed to wish to flee from every living thing, and to try to flee even from himself. Almost always alone, on horseback in the woods, he excessively fatigued his body in the hope of giving some peace to his mind. A hidden and incurable grief devoured him. At the bottom of his heart he reproached himself for having rendered his wife's life unhappy and for having contributed to her death. "If I had been there," he said, "she would have been saved, and I ought to have been there." This thought, which never left him, poisoned his life.

He desired that Camille's life might be happy, and he was ready at any time to make the greatest sacrifices to that end. His first idea, in coming back to Chardonneux, had been to try to replace for his daughter her whom she had lost, and to pay with usury that heart debt which he had contracted; but the remembrance of the resemblance between mother and child caused

him an intolerable grief. It was in vain that he sought to deceive himself about this grief, and to persuade himself that it would rather be a consolation to his eyes, an amelioration of his suffering, to find thus upon a beloved face the features of her for whom he wept without ceasing. Camille, in spite of all, was a living reproach to him, a proof of his fault and his misfortune, which he had not the strength to bear.

Uncle Giraud did not think so much about it. He thought only of amusing his niece and rendering life agreeable to her. Unfortunately, it was not so easy. Camille allowed herself to be led away without resistance, but she did not wish to take part in any of the pleasures which the goodman proposed to her. Neither walks nor *fêtes* nor theatres could tempt her; for all response she showed him her black dress.

The old master-mason was obstinate. He had rented, as we have seen, a furnished apartment in an inn of the *Messageries*, the first that a messenger in the street had indicated, expecting to remain there a month or two. He was there with Camille almost a year. During the year, Camille had refused all his propositions of pleasure parties, and as he was at the same time as good and patient as he was obstinate, he had waited a year without complaining. He loved this poor girl with all his heart, without himself knowing the cause, by one of those inexplicable charms which attaches goodness to misfortune.

"But still, I do not know," he said, finishing the bottle, "what prevents you from going to the Opera with me. That costs a great deal; I have the tickets in my pocket; your year of mourning was finished yesterday; you have two new dresses; besides, you have only to put on your cloak, and ——"

He stopped. "The devil!" he cried, "you don't hear what I am saying, what am I thinking about? But what matter? it is not necessary at such places. You will not hear, I will not listen. We will see the dancing, that is enough."

Speaking thus, the good uncle never dreamed, when he had something interesting to say, that his niece could neither hear nor reply to him. He chatted with her in spite of himself. On the other hand, when he tried to express himself by signs, it was even worse; she understood him still less. So he had adopted the habit of talking to her as to any one else, gesticulating, it is true, with all his might. Camille understood this speaking pantomime, and found means to reply after a fashion.

Camille's mourning had, indeed, just come to an end, as the goodman said. He had had two beautiful dresses made for his niece, and presented them to her in so tender and supplicating a way that she had thrown her arms about his neck to thank him, and then resumed the sad calmness habitual to her.

"But that is not all," said the uncle, "you must put on the beautiful dresses. That is what they were made

for, and these dresses are very pretty." All the time he spoke he walked about the room, making the dresses dance like marionettes.

Camille had cried enough for a moment of joy to be permitted her now. For the first time since her mother's death, she got up, stood before the mirror, took one of the dresses which her uncle showed her, looked at it tenderly, gave him her hand, and made a little sign of her head to say : "Yes."

At this sign the good Giraud leaped about in his great shoes like a child. He had triumphed ; the time had at last come when he would accomplish his design ; Camille was going to array herself, go out with him, see the Opera and the world ; he could not contain himself at this thought, he embraced his niece again and again, crying out for the maid, the servants, and the people of the house.

The toilet accomplished, Camille was so beautiful that she seemed to recognize it herself, and smiled at her own image.—"The carriage is below," said Uncle Giraud, trying to imitate with his arms the gesture of a coachman who whips his horses, and with his mouth, the noise of a carriage.—Camille smiled again, took the mourning dress which she had just taken off, folded it with care, kissed it, put it in the wardrobe, and went out.

VII

If Uncle Giraud was not elegant in his person, he at least prided himself on knowing how to do things in style. Nothing was so unimportant to him as his clothes; always brand new, and much too large, because he did not like being cramped, they adjusted themselves at will; his stockings were slovenly drawn up, and his wig fell over his eyes. But when he took it upon himself to treat others, he took care, in the first place, that everything should be of the costliest and best. He had engaged for that evening, for himself and Camille, a prominent open box so that his niece should be seen by everybody.

Camille was dazzled by the first glance at the stage and the audience, and no wonder: a young girl scarcely sixteen, raised in the depths of the country, and finding herself, all at once, transported into the midst of luxury, art, and pleasure, must have almost believed that she was dreaming. They were playing a ballet; Camille followed with interest the attitudes, gestures, and steps of the actors; she understood that it was a pantomime, and, as she was used to that, she tried to follow it. Every moment she turned toward her uncle with a stupefied air, as if to consult him; but he understood it as little as she did. She saw shepherds in silk

stockings offering flowers to their shepherdesses, cupids flying at the end of a cord, gods seated upon clouds. The decorations, the illumination, the lights, of which the brilliancy was charming, the attire of the women, the embroideries, the feathers, all the pomp of a *spectacle* unknown to her, threw her into pleasurable astonishment. She soon became, on her side, the object of almost general curiosity. Her toilet was simple, but in the best taste. Alone in a grand box, by the side of a man as little *à la mode* as was Uncle Giraud, beautiful as a star and as fresh as a rose, with great dark eyes, and an air of innocence, she necessarily attracted all eyes. Men began to point her out to each other, women to notice her. Marquises drew near, and the most flattering compliments, made in a loud tone, after the manner of the time, were addressed to the new-comer. Unfortunately, Uncle Giraud alone gathered these homages, which he tasted with delight.

However, Camille, little by little, at first regained her tranquil air, then a feeling of sadness seized her. She felt how cruel it was to be alone in the midst of this great crowd. These people who chatted in their boxes, these musicians, whose instruments regulated the measure of the steps of the actors, this vast exchange of thought between the stage and the audience, all thrust her, so to speak, back into herself.

“We speak, and you do not speak,” every one seemed to say to her; “we listen, we laugh, we sing, we love

each other, we enjoy everything ; you alone enjoy nothing, you alone hear nothing, you alone are only a statue, the phantom of a being who only stands by and looks on at life."

Camille closed her eyes to shut out this scene ; she remembered the children's ball where she had seen her little companions dance while she had remained by her mother. She saw again in thought her birthplace, her unfortunate infancy, her long sufferings, her secret tears at her mother's death ; finally, the black dress which she had just left off, and which she resolved to put on again as soon as she returned home. Since she was condemned forever, it seemed to her better that she should never attempt to suffer less. She felt more bitterly than ever that all effort on her part to resist the malediction of Heaven was useless. Enveloped in this thought, she could not resist some tears, which Uncle Giraud saw flow from her eyes ; he tried to divine the cause, when she made him a sign that she wished to go away. The goodman, surprised and uneasy, hesitated, not knowing what to do. Camille got up, and showed him the door of the box, that he might fetch her cloak.

At that moment she perceived above her in the gallery a young man of handsome appearance, very richly dressed, who held in his hand a piece of slate, upon which he traced letters and figures with a little white pencil. He then showed this slate to his neighbor, an older man than he, who seemed to understand

it at once, and replied to him in the same manner with great promptness. They exchanged at the same time, by opening and closing their fingers, certain signs, which seemed to serve better to communicate their ideas.

Camille understood nothing, neither the drawings, which she could hardly distinguish, nor the signs, which she did not know ; but she had remarked, at the first glance, that this young man did not move his lips. Ready to go out, she stopped. She saw that he spoke a language that was not that of others, and that he found means of expressing himself without that fatal movement of speech so incomprehensible to her, and which was the torment of her thoughts. What was this strange language ? An extreme surprise, an invincible desire to see more of it, made her resume the place she had just left ; she leaned on the railing of the box, and observed attentively what this unknown man did. Seeing him write again upon the slate, and present it to his companion, she made an involuntary movement as if to seize it in passing. At this moment the young man turned and saw Camille. Hardly had their eyes met than they both remained immobile and undecided, as if they tried to recognize each other ; then, in an instant, they understood each other, and said by a look : "We are both mute."

Uncle Giraud brought his niece her cloak and hood, but she did not wish to go now. She had reseated herself, and leaned against the balustrade.

The Abbé de l'Épée had just commenced to make himself understood.

Paying a visit to a lady in the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Victor, and touched with pity for two deaf-mutes whom by chance he had seen doing needle-work, the charity which filled his soul was awakened at once, and had already worked wonders. In the unskilled pantomime of these scorned and miserable beings, he found the germs of a fruitful language, which he believed might become universal, more true in every way than that of Leibnitz. Like most men of genius, he had, perhaps, gone beyond his end in overestimating its reach. But it was already much to recognize its grandeur. Whatever might have been the ambition of his goodness, he taught deaf-mutes to read and write. He replaced them in the number of men. Alone and unaided, by his own effort, he had undertaken to make a family of these unfortunate creatures, and he was prepared to sacrifice his life and his fortune to this project, until they could be brought to the notice of the king.

The young man seated near Camille's box was one of the pupils brought up by the abbé. Born a gentleman, and of an ancient family, possessing a fine intellect, but struck by this *semi-death*, as they called it then, he had been one of the first to receive almost the same education as the celebrated Comte de Solar, with this difference, that he was rich and did not run the risk of dying of hunger for lack of a pension from the Duc

de Penthievre. Independently of the abbé's lessons, they had given him a tutor, who, being a layman, could accompany him everywhere, and was charged naturally with watching over his actions and directing his thoughts—this was his companion who read from the slate.—The young man profited, with great care and application, by his daily studies, which exercised his mind everywhere, at the riding-school and at the Opera, as at the lecture and the mass; however, a little native pride and a very pronounced independence of character struggled in him against this painful application. He knew nothing of the evils which would have compassed him if he had been born in an inferior class, or even like Camille, in any other place than Paris. One of the first things that they had taught him, when he had commenced to spell, had been the name of his father, the Marquis de Maubray. He knew then that he was different from other men by the privilege of his birth, and also by a natural misfortune. Pride and humiliation thus disputed in his noble mind, which by good fortune, or perhaps through necessity, had remained most simple.

This marquis, a deaf-mute, observing and understanding others, as proud as any of them, who also, with his tutor, had dragged his red heels listlessly among the flower-beds of Versailles, according to the custom of the time, was observed by more than one pretty woman under cover of her glasses, but he never withdrew his gaze from Camille. She, on her side, saw him very

plainly, without appearing to look at him. The opera finished, she took her uncle's arm, and not daring to turn around, went home very pensive.

VIII

It goes without saying, that neither Camille nor Uncle Giraud knew even the name of the Abbé de l'Épée, still less did they anticipate discovering a new science which made the mute speak. The chevalier might have known of this discovery ; his wife would certainly have known of it if she had lived ; but Chardonneux was far from Paris ; the chevalier did not take a paper, or if he received it, he did not read it. Thus, at some leagues distance, a little laziness or death might produce the same result.

Arrived at home, Camille had but one idea. As well as gestures and looks could speak, she employed them to explain to her uncle that she must have, above everything, a slate and pencil. The good Giraud was not embarrassed by this demand, although it was addressed to him a little late, as it was time for supper. Sure that he had understood her, he ran to his room, and brought back in triumph to his niece a little board and a piece

of chalk, precious relics of his old love for building and carpentry.

Camille did not complain on seeing her desire fulfilled in this fashion ; she took the board upon her knees, and made her uncle sit by her side ; then she made him take the chalk, and seized his hand as if to guide it ; at the same time her restless eyes prepared to follow his least movements.

Uncle Giraud well understood that she asked him to write something, but what ? He did not know. "Is it the name of your mother ? Is it mine ? Is it yours ?" And to make her understand, he struck with the end of his finger, as softly as he could, upon the young girl's heart. She inclined her head ; the good man believed that he had guessed ; he then wrote in large letters the name Camille ; after which, satisfied with himself, and with the way he had passed the evening, and supper being ready, he sat down to the table without waiting for his niece, who had not the strength to take her place at the head.

Camille never retired until her uncle had finished his bottle ; she watched him take his repast, wished him good-night, then went to her room, taking her little board in her arms.

As soon as her door was bolted, she tried, in her turn, to write. She let down her hair, removed her paniers, and commenced to copy, with great care and infinite pains, the word that her uncle had traced for her,

and covered a great table, which was in the centre of the room, with white chalk. After more than one trial and many erasements, she was able to produce the letters which she had before her eyes. When this was done, and in order to assure herself of the exactitude of her copy, she had counted one by one the letters which had served as her model, and walked around the table, her heart palpitating with pleasure as if she had achieved a great victory. That word, *Camille*, which she had just written, seemed admirable to her, and expressed to her senses the most beautiful things in the world. In this word alone she seemed to see a multitude of thoughts, each sweeter, more mysterious, and more charming than the last. She was far from believing that it was only her name.

It was the month of July, the air was pure and the night superb. Camille had opened her window and paused there from time to time dreaming, her hair flowing, her arms crossed, her eyes brilliant, and beautiful with that pallor which the splendor of night gives women. She beheld one of the dreariest outlooks that one can see: the narrow court of a long house where a coach business is conducted. In this court, cold, damp, and unhealthy, a ray of sunlight had never penetrated; the height of the stories heaped up upon one another kept all the sun from this sort of cave. Four or five great carriages, crowded under a shed, presented their poles to whoever wished to enter. Two or three others,

left in the court for want of a better place, seemed to await the horses, whose constant kicking in the stable demanded hay from morning to night. Above a gate, strictly closed at midnight for the tenants, but always ready to open with great noise at all hours to the sound of a coachman's whip, arose enormous walls in which appeared about fifty window casements, where never a candle burned after ten o'clock, at least under ordinary circumstances.

Camille was about to leave the window, when all at once, in the shadow of a heavy coach, she thought she saw a human form, clothed in a handsome cloak and walking very slowly. A shiver of fear seized Camille at first without knowing why, for her uncle was there, and the proximity of the goodman was revealed by his snoring; why, too, should a robber or an assassin walk in this court in such a costume?

The man was there, however, and Camille saw him. He walked behind the carriages, looking toward the window where she was. After some moments, Camille's courage came back; she took the candle and held it outside the window, suddenly lighting up the court, at the same time looking down with a half-frightened, half-threatening expression. The shadow of the carriage was gone, and the Marquis de Maubray, for it was he, saw that he was completely discovered, and thereupon he dropped upon his knees, clasping his hands, as he gazed up at Camille, in an attitude of profound respect.

They remained thus for some moments,—Camille, at the window, holding the light, the marquis on his knees before her. If Romeo and Juliet, who only saw each other one evening at a masked ball, exchanged in their first meeting such oaths, faithfully kept, let us imagine what would be the first gestures and first expression of two lovers who could only speak by thoughts these same feelings, eternal before God, and which the genius of Shakespeare has immortalized upon earth.

It is certainly ridiculous to mount on two or three steps in order to hold on to the top railing of a carriage, stopping at each effort that one is obliged to make in order to know if he may continue. It is true that a man in silk stockings and embroidered waistcoat runs the risk of making a bad appearance when he attempts to leap from the top of a carriage on to a window casement. All that is unquestionable, except when one is in love.

When the Marquis de Maubray was in Camille's room, he commenced by making her a bow as ceremonious as if they had met at the Tuileries. If he had been able to speak, perhaps he would have related to her how he had escaped the vigilance of his tutor; how, by giving some money to the lackey, he had come to pass the night under her window; how he had followed her when she had left the Opera; how a look from her had changed his entire life; how he loved only her in all the world and aspired to having the happiness

of offering her his hand and fortune. All that was written upon his lips ; but the bow with which Camille had returned his salutation made him understand how useless such a recital would have been, and that it mattered little to her how he had come there, so long as he was there.

Monsieur de Maubray, in spite of a certain audacity, of which he gave proof in thus penetrating to the presence of her he loved, was, as we have said, simple and reserved. After having saluted Camille, he tried in vain to find a way of asking her if she would accept him for her husband ; but she understood nothing of what he tried to explain. He saw upon the table the board on which was written the name *Camille*. He took the piece of chalk and wrote his own—*Pierre*—by the side of it.

“ What does all this mean ? ” cried a great bass voice ; “ whoever heard of such a rendezvous ? How did you introduce yourself here, monsieur ? What are you doing in this house ? ”

It was Uncle Giraud who spoke thus, entering furiously, in his dressing-gown.

“ This is a pretty state of things ! ” he continued. “ God knows that I was asleep, and that if you made any noise it was at least not with your tongue. What sort of beings are you who find nothing more simple than to scale everything ? What is your intention ? To ruin a carriage, to break everything, to make havoc, and

after that, what? To dishonor a family! To throw shame and infamy upon honest people —”

“This one does not hear, either,” cried Uncle Giraud, dumfounded. But the marquis took a pencil and piece of paper, and wrote: “I love Mademoiselle Camille, I wish to marry her, I have twenty thousand francs income. Will you give her to me?” “It takes the people who don’t speak, to manage their affairs so quickly,” said Uncle Giraud.

“But what am I thinking about?” he exclaimed after several moments of reflection; “I am not her father, I am only her uncle; I must ask her father’s consent.”

IX

It was not an easy matter to obtain the chevalier’s consent to such a marriage; not that he was indisposed, as we have seen, to do all that was possible to render his daughter less unfortunate; but there was a difficulty almost insurmountable in the circumstances presented. He was asked to unite a woman afflicted with a horrible infirmity to a man afflicted in the same way, and, if such a union bore fruits, it was probable that it would only be putting more unfortunate creatures in the world.

The chevalier, always a prey to the deepest sorrow, had retired to his own place and continued to live in solitude. Madame des Arcis had been buried in the park ; several weeping-willows surrounded her grave and announced to those passing the modest place where she reposed. It was toward this place that the chevalier directed his steps every day on his walks. There he passed long hours, devoured by the saddest regrets, and yielding to all remembrances which could nourish his grief.

It was there that Uncle Giraud found him one morning. On the day after he had surprised the two lovers together, the goodman had left Paris with his niece, had taken Camille to Mans, and left her there in his own house to await the result of his interview with her father.

Pierre, advised of this journey, had promised to be faithful and to remain ready to keep his word. Orphan for a long time, master of his fortune, having only need of the advice of his tutor, his wish had no obstacle to fear. The goodman, on his side, was glad to serve as mediator and try to marry the young people ; but he did not intend that that first interview, which seemed to him queer enough, should be renewed otherwise than with the permission of the father and the notary.

As may well be imagined, the chevalier showed the greatest astonishment at Uncle Giraud's story. When

the goodman commenced to relate that meeting at the Opera, that strange scene, and that more singular proposition, he could hardly conceive that such a romance was possible. Forced, however, to recognize that he was serious, the objections which might be expected presented themselves at once to his mind.

“What do you mean?” said he to Giraud. “To unite two beings equally unfortunate? Is it not enough to have in our family this poor creature, whose father I am? Must we go on increasing our misfortune by giving her a husband like her? Am I destined to see myself surrounded by beings rejected by the world, objects of scorn and pity? Am I to pass my life with these dumb creatures, to grow old in the midst of their frightful silence, to have my eyes closed by their hands? My name, of which I am not vain, God knows, but which, after all, is the name of my father, am I to give it to these afflicted beings who can neither sign it nor pronounce it?”

“Not pronounce,” said Giraud, “but sign it, yes; that is a different thing.”

“Sign it!” cried the chevalier. “Have you lost your senses?”

“I know what I am talking about, and that young man can write,” replied the uncle. “I can bear witness and testify that he even writes very well and very readily, as his proposition, which I have in my pocket, and which is very straightforward, will assure you.”

The good man showed the chevalier the paper upon which the Marquis de Maubray had traced the few words which expressed, in a laconic manner it is true, but very clearly, the object of his demand.

“What does this mean?” cried the father. “How long have deaf-mutes been able to use the pen? What story is this you are telling me, Giraud?”

“My faith!” said Giraud, “I only know what is a fact, not how such a thing can be done. The truth is that my intention was simply to distract Camille, and also to see with her a little of those whirligigs. This little marquis was there, and it is certain that he had a slate and pencil which he used very glibly. Like you, I always thought that when one was dumb it meant that one could say nothing; but not at all. It seems that a discovery has recently been made by which dumb people understand one another and converse very well among themselves. They say that there is an abbé, whose name I forget, who has invented this means of communication. As for me, you understand well that a slate has only seemed good for roofing a house; but these Parisians are so clever!”

“Are you serious in what you say?”

“Very serious. This little marquis is rich, handsome; he is a gentleman born and very gallant; I vouch for him. Think, I beg of you, of one thing, what will you do with this poor Camille? She cannot speak, it is true, but that is not her fault. What do you wish her

to become? She cannot always remain a girl. Here is a man who loves her; this man, if you give her to him, will never be disgusted with her on account of a fault which she has at the end of her tongue; he knows what that is himself. Those children understand each other, they hear each other without having to scream. The little marquis knows how to read and write; Camille will learn how before long; it will not be more difficult for her than for another. Of course, if I proposed to marry your daughter to a blind man, you would be right to laugh in my face, but I propose a deaf-mute, and that is reasonable. You see that for the sixteen years that you have had that little one, you have never been reconciled. How can you expect a man made like the rest of mankind, to arrange matters, if you, who are her father, do not bear your part?"

While the uncle was speaking, the chevalier glanced from time to time at his wife's tomb, and seemed to be thinking profoundly:

"My daughter given the usage of thought," he said, after a long silence. "Will God permit it? is such a thing possible?"

At this moment the curate of a neighboring village entered the garden, going to dine at the castle. The chevalier saluted him listlessly, then suddenly coming out of his reverie:

"Abbé," he said, "you sometimes know the news, and you take the papers. Tell me, have you ever heard

of a priest who has undertaken the education of deaf-mutes?"

Unfortunately, the person to whom this question was addressed was a veritable country curate of those times, a simple, good man, but very ignorant, sharing the prejudices of those times, of which there were so many and such fatal ones.

"I do not know what monseigneur means," replied he,—treating the chevalier as the seigneur of the village,—"at least unless he refers to the Abbé de l'Épée."

"Precisely," said Uncle Giraud. "That is the name they told me; I did not remember it."

"Ah, well!" said the chevalier, "how much must one believe of it?"

"I do not wish," replied the curate, "to speak too positively upon a matter with which I am not yet completely acquainted. But I am inclined to believe, after the few evidences that I have had time to gather on the subject, that this Monsieur de l'Épée, who appears to be a person altogether praiseworthy, has not accomplished the end which he proposed."

"What do you mean by that?" said Uncle Giraud.

"I mean," said the priest, "that the purest intentions sometimes fail in their result. It is without doubt true, from what I can learn, that the most laudable efforts have been made; but I have every reason to believe that the pretension to teach

deaf-mutes to read, as monseigneur says, is altogether chimerical."

"I have seen it with my own eyes," said Giraud; "I have seen a deaf-mute who wrote."

"I am far from wishing to contradict you in any way," replied the curate; "but learned and distinguished persons, among whom I could even cite doctors of the Faculty of Paris, have assured me in a peremptory manner that the thing is impossible."

"A thing which one sees cannot be impossible," replied the goodman impatiently. "I have travelled fifty leagues with a note in my pocket to show to the chevalier; here it is, it is as plain as the day."

In thus speaking, the old master-mason had again drawn out his paper, and put it under the curate's eyes. He, half-astonished and half-piqued, examined the note, turned it about, read it aloud several times, and returned it to the uncle without knowing what to say.

The chevalier had remained outside of the discussion; he continued to walk in silence, and his uncertainty increased momentarily.

"If Giraud is right," he thought, "and if I refuse, I fail in my duty; it is almost a crime that I commit. An occasion presents itself when this poor child, to whom I have given only the appearance of life, finds a hand stretched out to her in the darkness in which she is plunged. Without escaping from this night which will always envelop her, she can dream that she is happy."

What right have I to prevent it? What would her mother say if she were here? — ”

The chevalier's eyes again sought the tomb; then taking Uncle Giraud's arm, he drew him several steps apart, and said in a low tone: “Do as you wish.”

“Good,” said the uncle, “I am going to get her and bring her here; she is at my house; we can all be together in an instant.”

“Never!” replied the father. “Let us try together to make her happy; but I do not wish to see her.”

Pierre and Camille were married in Paris, at the church of the Petits-Pères. The tutor and the uncle were the only witnesses. When the priest officiating addressed them the formula in use, Pierre, who had learned enough to know when he must incline his head as a sign of assent, acquitted himself very well in a rôle which was difficult enough to accomplish. Camille did not try to divine nor understand anything; she watched her husband, and bowed her head when he did.

They had only needed to see each other in order to love. When they came out of the church, holding each other's hands forever, it seemed as if they knew each other well enough. The marquis had a grand house. After the mass, Camille stepped into a brilliant equipage, which she regarded with infantine curiosity. The house to which they drove was not her least subject of interest. The apartments, the horses, the servants that

were going to be hers, all seemed marvellous to her. It had been arranged that this marriage should be very quiet ; a simple supper was all the festivity made.

X

Camille became a mother. One day, as the chevalier was taking his sad walk in the park, a servant brought him a letter written in a hand which he did not know, and in which he found a strange mixture of distinction and ignorance. It came from Camille, and ran as follows :

“O my father ! At last I speak, not with my mouth, but with my hand. My poor lips are still closed ; however, I know how to speak. He who is my master has taught me in order that I might write to you. He has had me taught by the same person who educated him, for you know that he remained like me for a long time. I have had a great deal of trouble in learning. They teach us first to speak with the fingers, then we learn the written figures. There are all sorts, to express fear, anger, and everything in general. It takes a long time to know it all, and longer still to form words ; for the figures are not the same thing ; but finally it is accomplished, as you see. The Abbé de l'Épée is a very good

and kind man, the same as Father Vanin of the Christian Doctrine.

“I have a child that is very beautiful; I do not dare yet to say, before I know, whether it is like us. But I cannot resist the pleasure that I have in writing to you, in spite of our trouble, for you can well imagine that my husband and I are very uneasy, above all, because we cannot hear. The servant hears well, but we are afraid that she is mistaken; thus we wait with great impatience to see if he will open his lips, and move them with the sounds of those who hear and speak. You may well imagine that we have consulted the doctors to know if it is possible that the child of two persons, afflicted as we are, should not be a deaf-mute also; and they tell us that it is, but we do not dare to believe it.

“Judge with what fear we watch this poor child all the time, and how we are embarrassed when he opens his little lips, and we do not know if they make sounds. Be sure, my father, that I think often of my mother, for she endured this uneasiness about me. You loved her well, as I love my child; but I have been only an object of grief to you. Now that I read and write, I understand well all that my mother suffered.

“If you wish to be very good to me, dear father, come to see us in Paris; that would be a subject for joy and gratitude to your respectful daughter.

“CAMILLE.”

After having read this letter, the chevalier hesitated a long time. At first he could hardly believe his eyes, and that it was Camille herself who wrote to him, but he had to yield to the evidence. What should he do? If he yielded to his daughter, and went to Paris, he would place himself in a position to find in a new grief all the remembrances of an old one. A child, whom he did not know, it is true, but who was none the less the son of his daughter, could bring back all his past sufferings. Camille would recall Cécile, and, moreover, he could not help sharing the uneasiness of this young mother, awaiting a word from her child.

“You must go,” said Uncle Giraud, when the chevalier consulted him. “I made this marriage, and I hold it good and durable. Would you desert your own blood in trouble? Is it not enough—I say it without reproach—to have forgotten your wife at the ball when she fell into the water? Will you also forget this little one? Do you think being sad is everything? You are so, I admit, and more than is wise; but do you think that there is nothing else to do in the world? She asks you to go; let us set out. I go with you, and I have only one regret: it is that she did not ask me, too. It was not right on her part not to have knocked at my door, which has always been open to her.”

“He is right,” thought the chevalier. “I made the best of wives suffer cruelly and uselessly; I allowed her to die a frightful death when I might have saved her.

If I am called upon to suffer now through the spectacle of my daughter's misfortune, I ought not to complain; however painful this sight may be for me, I ought to bring myself to it and condemn myself to it. This chastisement is due me. Let the daughter punish me for having abandoned the mother! I will go to Paris, I will see this child. I have forsaken those I loved, I have separated myself from misfortune; I wish now to take a bitter pleasure in contemplating it."

In a pretty, wainscoted boudoir, on the entresol of a handsome house, situated in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, the young wife and the husband were sitting, when the father and the uncle arrived. Upon a table were drawings, books, and engravings. The husband was reading, the wife embroidering, and the child playing on the carpet.

The marquis got up; Camille ran to her father, who embraced her tenderly, and could not keep back the tears; but the eyes of the chevalier were soon directed to the child. In spite of himself, the horror which he formerly had for the infirmity of Camille took possession of his heart at the sight of this being who was going to inherit the malediction which he had bequeathed to him. He recoiled when they presented the child to him.

"Another mute!" he cried.

Camille had understood without hearing. She took her son in her arms, and gently lifting him before the

chevalier, she placed her finger upon his little lips, patting them gently to invite speech. The child allowed itself to be coaxed a few moments, then pronounced very distinctly these two words, which the mother had had him learn in advance:

“Good-morning, papa.”

“You see clearly that God always pardons everything,” said Uncle Giraud.

NOTES TO THE SON OF TITIAN

¹ People used to go about masked in Venice during the Carnival.—*Author's Note.*

² When Foscari was judged, Giacomo Loredano, son of Pierre, believed, or professed to believe, that it was his duty to avenge the ruin of his family. In his account-books—for he was engaged in commerce like most patricians of that time—he had entered, with his own hand, the doge among his debtors, “for the death of my father and my uncle.” The opposite page he left blank in order to record the recovery of this debt, and, in fact, after the death of the doge, he wrote on this page: *I'ha pagata*,—he has paid it. Daru, *History of the Venetian Republic*.—*Author's Note.*

³ Nymph with whom Bacchus was in love; changed into a bunch of grapes.—*Author's Note.*

⁴ It is due to the researches of a celebrated amateur, Monsieur Doglioni, that we know that such a picture ever existed.—*Author's Note.*

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